MR. DIDE · HIS VACATION IN COLORADO.

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"The Old, Old Story."

MR. DIDE

HIS

VACATION IN COLORADO

AND

Other Sketches

BY

L. B. FRANCE

AUTHOR OF "ROD AND LINE," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK

BROMFIELD AND COMPANY.

1890

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For him who seeks her solitudes in sympathy, Nature has always a welcome. What we call storms are but her periods of house-cleaning, and the sunshine of her smile lurks in every humor; with love it is easy to adapt ourselves to her moods and with prudence we may avoid her missiles.

MR. DIDE:

HIS VACATION IN COLORADO.

CHAPTER I.

A COLD SLOT.

THE upper end of the mercury is anchored, say in the vicinity of twenty degrees below zero, and there are two feet of snow on the ground. I have to travel a hundred miles or more from Denver; one mile on foot, the others by rail.

As I make my way down street early in the morning, with the rising sun turning the white peaks into rose-color, I feel disposed to halt and watch the changes. But I am denied the privilege of even walking slowly; I must wipe the tears from my eyes and hurry. The few people I meet seem cheery, and they steam along, reminding me of the cigarette smokers; the men wear icicles for beards, and one woman has a luminous nose, and I think is aware of it, for she holds her handkerchief to her face as she passes by. No one says

good-morning—we have become too metropolitan for such courtesies—but every one expresses by a glance, "Cold! ain't it?" and steams on. One should always keep one's mouth shut on such a morning; one's inspirations will always be full and the shoulders thrown back without trying—that is if one be healthy. There is not the faintest indication of a breeze, and the iron tires of a heavy freight wagon, laboring slowly along, ring out like the music of tiny bells, close and smooth, as though the master of the baton were directing a legato movement. The driver walks by the side of his team, thrashing one hand against his shoulder and holding the lines with the other; the horses are half hidden in the steam of their own providing and are frosted even to their flanks. Thunder and Mars! but it is cold! and a cloud of cold air rushes into the car with me. The ebony deity presiding over the coach looked on with a wide, white smile as I thawed my beard.

"Ain't gwine fishin' to-day?"

He seemed a little puzzled when I said I might indulge in a bit of angling. Perhaps he had never fished through the ice, or was not aware that the art of angling depended upon other things than bait and hook and line, or was not aware, in fact, that these tools might be dispensed with, and the votary of the gentle art still be successful.

The only other occupants of the car were two young ladies, neither of them over twenty years of age, I dare be sworn, and behind whom the porter

assigned me a seat. They sat facing each other. One of these young ladies was a blonde with fluffy hair daintily banged, her cheeks were rosy and she reveled in the faintest intimation of brevity of nose—just enough of heavenward proclivity to make it cunning. Her companion was a brunette in glasses, possessing a delicate creamy complexion and a close-fitting dainty ear, not marred by a ring or a place for one. I speak of one ear, the one immediately under my observation. I subsequently learned that she was endowed with a pair, and they were mates, very pretty, and uninfluenced by the cold, of a delicate pink that seemed to rival the exquisite tint of sea shells I had seen; a very bewitching ear, an ear into which a lover—but perhaps I would better not follow the lead of that ear any farther, and will let go before I fall into trouble. Being absorbed I did not catch what the blonde said to the ear, but having released myself, I took in the reply:

"Darwin's theory is, to my mind, correct, and the strongest argument in favor of immortality within my experience."

An experience of less than twenty years! Think of it!

The blonde put on a look of deeper interest; as for myself, a feeling of weak dependence began to creep over me and finally settled in my back. The brunette continued:

"We know that man is an improvement on the monkey, and we know how imperfect man is even

in his best estate—are we not authorized in believing that the next change will present something grander?"

I began to wonder whether some man had not failed in his contract with this young lady. The glasses suggested Boston, and yet she was too young for a vagrant schoolma'am or a victim in a desert world. I debated concerning the man and whether I should blame him, if one were in the case, and my wonder quite resolved itself into a conviction in favor of the man. To set my mind at rest if possible, I changed my seat to one behind the blonde. When I saw the pretty, quiet face, and the eloquent, brown eyes appealing to the blonde for approval, I was more in doubt than ever. To get out of the labyrinth I went into the smoking room and took counsel of my briar-root and the foot-hills.

Snow everywhere! The willows are dressed in gray and the pines are almost black; the purple haze of summer has changed into a veil of white and the shrub oaks are garmented in ragged coats of brown. No living thing, except the snow-birds, is in sight between me and the hills, piling tier upon tier to the summit of the range. It is not like looking back from the front seat in the pit upon a grand-opera night—the colors are all sober. Where the rugged cliffs are too precipitous for the snow to cling, I find Titanic jewels with white settings. It is a good time to learn, in truth, how rough and broken are the outlines that the sum-

mer's breath makes smooth. Stripped of their finery their majesty is sterner, that is all, but they are still to be reverenced—there is the difference, merely, between the smile and the frown of one we know to be worthy of love, but always lovable. The fences make the white fields look like great, clean napkins edged with black lace and spread out smoothly, to dry.

As we get farther away from the Platte Valley a bird of evil omen shows himself, looking blacker, if possible, as he hovers over this ocean of white. I wonder what has become of the ravens? In the early days they were plentiful and tame, coming into town and perching on the fences and house-tops, alert for food, and in the evening, before twilight would set in they were wont to string along overhead, upon lazy wing, to their roost up the river. We must have become too metropolitan also for these sable friends and they are going out with the pioneers! When I saw this solitary representative of the old abundance, he brought to me the remembrance of other changes—I realized thirty miles an hour and steam, instead of ten miles and mules; a luxurious car with scarcely a vibration, instead of the swaying Concord redolent of old leather, musty hay and the stables. Overcoats, buffalo shoes and blankets are necessaries no longer. Yet the old coach possessed some excellent attributes: it was a great leveller of artificial barriers; its patrons were democratic in its presence if never so before or after; they

were rarely otherwise than jolly; the emergency demanded cheerfulness, as hardship always does if one would succeed in overcoming obstacles; one might not sit and dream with open eyes in such surroundings. Shadows of familiar faces are flitting about me, very eloquent they are in their silence. And now and then will come one, and another, demanding deeper recognition and whose ways are so sweet to remember that I forget all except the old coaching days and——

But I declare! while I have been drifting, the window has grown dim—it must be with the frost —and I am compelled to wipe it off that I may see a bevy of snow-buntings; bright little fellows in mottled jackets and black neckties. They easily make, in their billowy flight, twenty-five miles an hour. The train is going at that rate, or more, and they keep along with it as if to cheer us on the road for a few hundred yards and then alight to have their places taken by others. They are very numerous, thanks to some one who loved them and placed a penalty in the statute books against their destruction.

Down there in a hollow, sheltered by the bluffs, are a cabin and a corral, and a few stacks of hay protected by a fence. Outside stand three creatures drawn up, and shivering, it must be, wishfully feeding their minds on the unattainable luxury under their noses. I would like to halt long enough to drive the owner out of bed, or away from his fire, with hydraulic appliances. A mag-

pie alights on the back of one of the cows, perhaps to inspire her with hope and to remind her that summer will come again.

As we climb toward the summit of the Divide I catch a glimpse of one of my castles. When travelling by I always look out for this property of mine, to assure myself that it has not been trespassed upon. Some one has taken the liberty of levelling a camera at it, and bestowing a name upon it, thinking it deserted, perhaps, and assuming a claim upon it for that reason. But it is not, nor has it ever been deserted since my knowledge of it; my people are always there. Sweeping round a certain curve in the road the grand pile, without moat or drawbridge, now comes into full view. Its white turrets shine in the morning sun and its grand doorway is always open as a token of the hospitality ever to be found in its spacious halls. It is the old-time hospitality, of course—say of the feudal age—rude, maybe, but bestowed with royal munificence, to be in keeping with the precincts. Claw-hammer coats, vests of percale cut low, and glaring shirt fronts of linen would be novelties amid the concourse of mailed cavaliers and hardy retainers wont to gather here. Its great banqueting hall is decked with ghosts of armor and the rugged walls are hung with rude implements in keeping with the ghosts; the skins of beasts serve as beds or floor cloths as occasion may demand; rough benches and a long table with no sign of covering; a high stiff-backed chair at

the end above the salt, where may sit the master. The broad fireplace is aglow this cold day and the fire roars and sparkles up the wide chimney, and dogs lie dozing in its cheerful warmth, while leather-clothed servitors clank back and forth. But how quickly the dogs awake and all the surroundings vanish at the sound of the shriek ahead of me! We have seen much at the rate we are going—and it is better so—we are not moving backward; the broadcloth claw-hammer is, after all, an improvement on the coat of mail.

My other grand estate south of the Divide is also encumbered with the winter mantle, and because of it the red ruins over under the foot-hills are more sharply defined. The red castle on the left with its arched porchway stands out grandly against the clear blue background. But there is no one at home, the place seems deserted for the time; the usual inmates may be away on a hunt in those groves beyond, or perhaps they may have vanished for the same reason as did those we found on the north side.

The air grows warmer as we go on. Above the Peak a few clouds are hovering, and I notice above the summits of the lower mountains two long, slender clouds of a deadwood color. Presently these join at one end, and soon the other ends swing together and form an oval with a stretch of blue between, and there is a lake above the horizon. It requires no stretch of the imagination; on the contrary, I find I am compelled to satisfy

my mind that one part of the cloud must be above the other, else the highest is the near shore, in the plane of my vision, and I look across a sheet of blue water to the farther side. An irregular rift in one place makes a cove, and on the bank is a cabin, and around the edges is fallen timber. Thanks to the absent winds, I am for twenty minutes or more treated to this view of a lake and its wooded surroundings, made of a strip of blue sky and a cloud.

It is not necessary that I disclose where I had dinner this day—there were no bills of fare printed, and as I took a seat at one of the small tables I saw that the others were not crowded. It was evidently a cold day for the landlord as well as the rest of us. At one of the tables stood the blonde, her hat and cloak off, and a dainty white apron, with frills and pockets, tied about her waist. She was evidently not here in the character of a guest. Before I had time to wonder why she might be here in the other capacity, a voice at my shoulder said rapidly:

"Roast-beef-boiled-mutton-caper-sauce-pork-and-beans-veal-pie."

I thought I recognized the tones and squared myself to take in the glasses and brown eyes of the brunette. While I studied them she said it all over again in the same key and without pause, as though under conviction that she would forget a part if she failed in the stereotyped manner. She smiled at the end of the second stanza and I

saw that her teeth were very white and even—were pretty, indeed, and so was the smile. She sang it again, a note higher, and at the conclusion I could trace only the ghost of the smile. It was time for me to respond. I was painfully aware of it, but somehow I persisted in wandering away thousands of ages and drifting about in the mysteries of the primary period, barking my shins on the azoic rocks trying to find the starting-point and to trace the connection.

"Will you tell me what you want?"

The mood was now imperative. I said I could not tell her that, but I would take pork and beans.

CHAPTER II.

A WARMER TRAIT.

A SCIENTIFIC knowledge of botany is by no means essential to happiness. Latin does not add an atom of beauty to the wild clematis. One can admire a healthy, bright-eyed baby without knowing its name. This morning after I start out on the railroad I notice that the July flowers are abundant on the slopes leading up to the foot-hills. Great patches of wild poppies grow here and there —it is not an infatuating plant, but one loses sight of the coarse leaves in the delicate white of the bloom. The bluish-gray of the wild chamomile of itself makes a rich carpet, but into this the hand of the Master has woven a countless variety of colors. Hanging in bountiful clusters of crimson and scarlet is a little flower, shaped like that of the honeysuckle; beside it, pendant from their slender stems, a wealth of purple bells, while a little canary-colored gem—a tiny, perfect, five-pointed star—peeps up modestly, as if asking permission to add its atom to the gorgeous pattern. So we have acres of tender beauty. I am glad to know that I am not alone in the enjoyment of it. At the first station, where the liberty of a few

minutes' pause is allowed, a gentleman with his trousers in his boots gives us to understand that appearances are deceitful, by gathering a bouquet, and a young man in light-colored tweed, small umbrella and eyeglass redeems himself also, in like manner. The ladies are delighted and full of wonder, so beautiful they are—the flowers, I mean, yet lacking fragrance; how can it be? Two senses at least expectant and only one can be gratified? A little three-year-old, disappointed, stigmatizes them as "weed flowers," but is compelled, at the instance of a juvenile friend, to admit: "They are pretty, anyway." They have a generous influence too; people who had barely looked at each other for forty miles, pleasantly express a common sentiment one to another, it may be a smile or a glance merely, but it is sufficient to make them know they are of kin; even the young man with the umbrella unbends and feels on the same plane with humanity.

The delicate haze of summer is again upon the hills; the great, white napkins of a little while ago are changed into fields of grain shimmering in the sun as they are brushed by the gentle wind; the cattle no longer haunt the hay-stack, but slowly feed along the mesas, or, filled and sleek, complacently chew their cuds in the shadows of the pines; my castles on the Divide give evidence of thrift in the surroundings, and in their summer garb display the exquisite taste of their mistress; the song of the meadow lark strikes high above the roar of

the car wheels, and you lose entirely the clang of the iron in the clear, sweet trill from the golden-throated beauty perched upon an adjacent fence, or half hid in some grassy tussock; the pines have turned to a lighter green, the willows are in full leaf, and as the eye sweeps over the brilliant carpet toward the foot-hills and beyond, it encounters the only sign of winter in the patches of snow lingering in the clefts of the distant range; you mark the irregular sky-line of the towering summits against that background of delicate blue, while the loftier peaks may be kissed by a cloud. Does disease weigh you down; do you fret under the vexations and disappointments of the daily drudgery; has the sordid strife among your fellows made you feel that life is not worth living; does sorrow brood in your heart? Why, look you, this leaf is a panacea for hurt minds! it was not created for you, but you are so constituted that you may find solace in it if you will—it is one of the many out of the book that gives our copper-hued, untutored brother, *faith*. Will you accept less than he?

But I am reminded that if I loiter so, I shall not reach Cascade in a week. The Deacon, a young friend of mine, and the Major, are to join me there, fully equipped for a campaign in the Roan Range. I propose, however, to make them stop by the way, as the humor moves me.

Speeding across and down the south side of the Divide, I notice trespassers on a part of my whilom wild estate under the foot-hills at the right.

Specks of cottages perched upon the slope of one of my glades do not add to the romance of the picture, yet I feel a bit flattered in that the builders have exhibited good taste in selecting a location for their brown-roofed boxes. They can be cool in summer and enjoy a view of mountains and plains. Then they may speculate, too, upon what preceded the pines and grass-covered earth about them. The gorge just back of them, and the meagre creek tumbling out from it, give a hint, and as we move quickly down the narrow valley dolmons here and there indicate that the little creek is only the remains of a river of ice. These monuments of the centuries are very abundant hereabouts. I have seen fossilized bivalves from this same drift down which I am speeding, and am set to wondering what kind of mortals inhabited these shores when those oysters were growing, and whether the brown-roofed cottages on the slope above are an improvement upon the architecture of that epoch. Or how many millions of years preceding that ice and ocean age this same valley was a bed of verdure, as now; and whether those who stirred up the soil are permitted to look on us and whether they do so in sympathy with us in our tragedies, or are our tragedies all comedies to them?

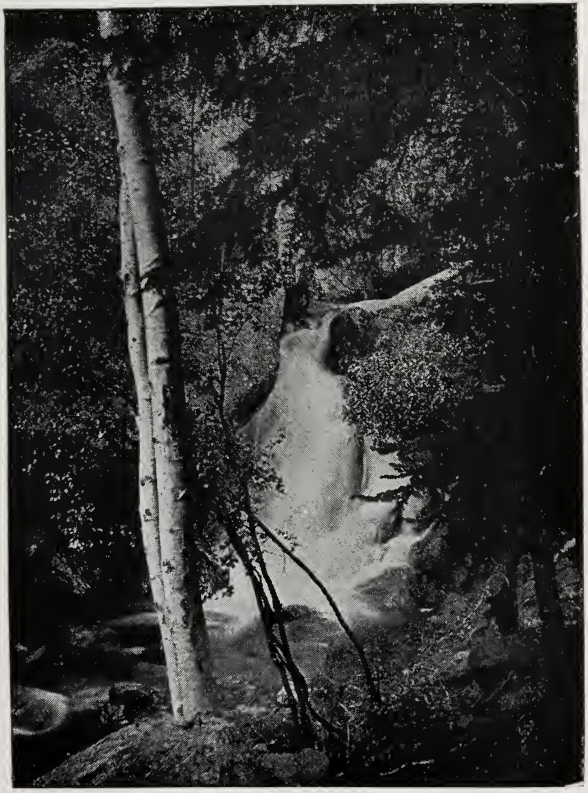
Loitering again! well, why may one not loiter when he finds a thrifty city of his own time flourishing on an old ocean bed? This new city is filled with the refinement and culture of the age, even

its outlying shanties have an air of respectability. It has its share of vices too, no doubt; however, reformation is not my mission, the duties are too delicate; I might be admonished to "throw the first stone" if I dared. But there is no harm in wondering whether the culture and refinement that flourished in the same spot a great many centuries ago was different from the present ideal. We will not discuss it, as you suggest, but sweep round and into the mountain gorge at our right, looking down, as we speed along, upon Manitou. The Spirit invites one to linger again, and there is comfort in the reflection that the Kind Mother will welcome our coming, without stopping to inquire whether we are compelled by the result of our vices to seek her beautiful places, or are prompted by our virtues.

Thirty years since, the way we are travelling was an unbroken wilderness; the Ute was only then being succeeded by the prospector. · Had it been suggested to the latter that his successors would ever journey by rail, it would have moved him to pity for the unfortunate mental plight of the prophet. A broad-gauge train of cars speeding over the way where he found it toilsome to creep! Could anything be more preposterous? Yet we are careening round graceful curves upon the precipitous mountain sides, rushing over bridges that span yawning chasms, plunging from light into darkness and out again from the short tunnels into the light, ever on and up without impedi-

ment. Surely, for the first time, it is like a pleasant dream, and one almost forgets to take in the gorgeous, ever-changing panorama made up of pinnacles, pine-clad hills, towering cliffs and flashing stream. Soon the gorge widens into a cozy dell; to the right, a gentle grass-covered slope, with countless wild flowers woven into the pattern, and groups of young pines here and there, leads up to a tier of hills with rock-crowned summits. To the left is Cascade Cañon, sentinelled by lofty cliffs, and from out its shady recesses comes tumbling the bright mountain stream that suggested the name.

The departing train leaves, besides myself, the gentleman with the eyeglasses and slim umbrella. After dinner, while I solace myself with the briar-root, this gentleman sits a little way off on the veranda puffing a cigar. There is another, an obese party, walking up and down; he is not to be mistaken; his boots are shiny, so are his coat and trousers, and his felt hat gives token of grease and dust about the band. His shirt bosom discloses a compromise between cheviot and wool, and he wears an immense gold nugget for a breast-pin. He possesses the air of one with prospects and bestows an occasional glance of inquiry upon the gentleman with the umbrella. He catches the latter's eye, and halts, almost imperceptibly, feels encouraged, nods and approaches; then with an expression of boundless hospitality pervading his entire person, bursts forth:



McGregor Falls, Cascade Cañon.

"A stranger in Colorado?"

The gentleman with the eyeglasses pauses in the middle of a puff, looks up staringly, and the next moment relapses into his wonted contentment, while the native takes a seat.

"Ya-a-s."

"The grandest country in the world; scenery unsurpassed, and the climate superb; the air—there's nothing like the vivifying air—do you notice the air?"

"Notice—ah—notice the aha?"

The stranger dropped his eyeglass, replaced it suddenly and stared a further inquiry at his interrogator.

"Exactly—the lightness of it—its purity—the ozone, as it were——"

"Aw—y-a-s—I smell the fwagwance of the pines, and I feel sleepy when——"

"You've struck it, my dear sir—that's what every one says—they always feel sleepy on first coming out—but you'll overcome that in time—it's a wide-awake country, you will find."

"You have wesided some time in Colowado, y-a-s?"

"Well, y-e-s, so, so—a few years, long enough to become acquainted with the ways of the country. I came out to see about certain little mining interests," he continued in a burst of confidence, "and was detained longer than I expected, and now, I could not be induced to go anywhere else to live."

There was an air of firmness in this avowal of attachment that carried conviction with it.

"You are intawested in mines—y-a-s?"

"Slightly—enough to occupy my leisure time, that is all."

From the manner of the man he might have owned the State, exclusive of the mines.

"I have one nice little piece of property over in Dead Man's Gulch, I think of developing some day."

And while he patted this property on the back, so to speak, he plunged his hand into his pocket for—a specimen, of course—"ruby silver"—fabulous in ounces to the ton.

"Wooby silvah?" I heard the stranger inquire, as I relighted my pipe and started for the cañon.

The broad avenue quickly narrows into a trail, leading into charming nooks and shady retreats. The air is fragrant with the perfume of the pines and the half mile of cascades contributes to the delight with its music. The bed of this mountain brook is precipitous and has no still reaches in its current. There are seemingly a dozen picturesque waterfalls in its course, and the giver of names seems for once to have been moved with happy intelligence and good taste. At the Naiads' Bath I come to a halt in search of an Old Man, who, I am told, presides over this place sacred to the spirits that flit hereabout, to indulge in their holy ablutions. The early afternoon sun lights up the gray and brown of the cliffs almost overhead and helps work the stately rocks into fantastic shapes. I

find him at last, on the opposite mountain side, a tutelary deity carved out of the cold rock by the hand of old Time, and looking down silent and grim upon the consecrated pool of crystal. Not a great way below his chin, sits a modern belle, thin at the waist and with flowing skirts. The sculptor must have anticipated the day when she would be in the fashion, and set her up as a satire in the sanctuary.

While I rest here, peering into the depths in search of the ethereal beauties which I know must be sporting there, and who will be revealed to me by the bright rays glinting through the foliage, and while I listen in vain to catch some change in the deep notes of the silvery organ almost at my side, I am conscious of another presence and look up. The young woman in glasses and her companion with the fluffy hair are standing within a few feet of me. I am at once reduced to plain diet; even Darwin is forgotten, as his fair disciple with uplifted hands exclaims:

"Is it not lovely!"

Her companion had barely time ecstatically to coincide, when the man with the mine and his newly-found acquaintance climbed into sight. The man with the mine remarked for the benefit of all:

"Splendid site for an overshot wheel."

The gentleman with the umbrella said:

"Chawming," leaving one in doubt.

But a startled and evident feeling of astonishment made itself manifest in this gentleman's face

as the Darwinian, hearing voices behind her, turned in his direction.

"Why, Miss Gwace," he exclaimed, dropping his umbrella and extending both hands, "this is a vewey gwatifying supwise."

Miss Grace did not seem so much gratified, accepting one hand only, and allowing "Mr. Dide," as she named him, to recover his umbrella with the other.

I considered it high time for me to move on. I had not gone far when I heard a footstep behind me, and looking back, discovered the native puffing up the trail. He had taken off his coat, and was perspiring freely, so I halted, feeling a weakness for the practical mind. At the same time I took comfort in the reflection that there were many economical methods of exit from this life, and that the man with the mine might find one to his taste. If he would only fall off a rock! When he came up very red in the face and had mopped his thinly-covered temples with a questionable handkerchief, he told me it was "hot." I acquiesced by a nod, and he felt encouraged. I knew intuitively what he would say next, and in that affirmative sort of way that precludes denial:

"Stranger in Colorado? What part of the east are you from?"

"Italy."

"No! why, you talk like a native."

As it was the only word he heard me utter I considered him a competent judge, and felt flattered.

I inquired if he had explored the cañon, and he reluctantly denied that he had, but was going now to the top, notwithstanding it was "hot work" for a man of his "build." I wanted to give him credit, and would have done so, but for his remark touching the beautiful waterfall below. While I kept moving it was impossible for him to talk without discomfort, and I prayed that the way might become more precipitous. Suddenly the trail presented a termination. The rocks towered up grandly to the right, to the left was a steep incline, and directly in front a pile of rocks blocking up the way, save for a slight rift that might admit my working through. "The prayer of the wicked availeth not." I felt that I was one of the righteous: the man with the mine could never accomplish that keyhole, nor could he get around it. I went on with reverence and humility. When I looked around he stood on the lower side of the impassable barrier in evident contemplation, his hat pushed back, his coat still on his arm, and one hand poised in the act of mopping his dripping face. I found the grotto: great slabs of granite leaning together at the top and edges made smooth by the tempests of the ages, leaving a capacious, cool retreat below. I felt a momentary regret at the condition of the man with the mine, and lay in the shade listening to the music of the brook singing to me its mysteries: whence it came, whither it was going, and of its adventures thus far by the way.

CHAPTER III.

TWIN LAKES.

When the Deacon put in his appearance the next day according to appointment, he desired to know, first, whether I had gone up the cañon. I told him I had, then he wanted to know what I had seen to be pleased with. I advised him that when I had a week's leisure, and he felt inclined to listen, I would "dilate fully" my afternoon's experience; that a week devoted to the relation of each half day's enjoyment would be none too much; whereat he seemed tickled, for the cañon is a weakness with him. When I told him I had returned from the grotto in the cool of the afternoon after a delightful interview with the nymphs of the neighborhood, he insisted that I had made a mistake; that I should have climbed on up to the carriage road, and returned by that way, whence a delightful view of the valley and the wooded mountain sides could be obtained. But I reminded him I was in the humor to court the hidden recesses rather than the sunlight, and besides, that just above the grotto it was necessary, if I would go on, to swing off a perpendicular rock six feet, and I did not care to risk the leap. Then

he advised me of another trail turning off to the road, just below the Naiads' Bath, where the ascent was easy, and exacted a promise that the next time I would come out that way.

The Deacon being assigned to the office of guide and general counsellor concerning the early part of this expedition, he suggested that we take a trip into Manitou Park. It became my duty to inform him that we could not in a season, let alone three weeks, visit all the places of interest this side of White River; that we might stop a day or two at Twin Lakes and thence we must go straight into the wilderness.

"But there is a party going over into the park this afternoon; the station is only eight miles up the road, and we can have a delightful drive of half a dozen miles, and be back in time for the west-bound train to-morrow."

"Whom shall we have in this party, Deacon?"

"A couple of ladies, and a man—a dude—with an eyeglass; the ladies are pretty——"

"Deacon! Deacon! none o' that——"

"But see here, I mean the ladies are attractive, and——"

"Yes, I understand—one talks Darwin and wears glasses, and the other is a blonde."

"Exactly—where did you become acquainted with them? I had thought to introduce you."

I was compelled to set the Deacon right and inform him of my last winter's trip. Then I declined his offer of an introduction. He seemed a

little nettled at my indifference, and thereupon I pleaded old age in extenuation of my lack of gallantry.

"But, Deacon, how long have you been acquainted with these ladies; and who are they?"

"Oh, several months—the train is coming, let us go in to dinner."

I conjectured that there was a sensitive spot in the Deacon's anatomy, and I had unconsciously touched it with a rude hand. To apologize further at present might provoke embarrassment, and yet I feared something more was demanded of me. He came to my relief by taking a seat at the same table with the parties in question, leaving me in company with the Major, who had arrived on the train.

"Where is the Deacon?" was the Major's first inquiry. I motioned in the direction.

"Whom have we there?" I could give him no information, of course, and we discussed our dinner with the prospects which Twin Lakes might afford.

From the rear end of the train as it nears Manitou Park station, a view is had of the great peak which dwarfs that from the plains. The mountain seems to quadruple in size and grows in grandeur, until the great mass overtopping its companions appears to be standing alone, endowed with the consciousness of its own majesty. Miles beyond, and when we are traversing the lower end of the great South Park, the noble pile still stands

out, from its azure background, the gray of its rocks and the snow-drifts flashing down a royal smile in the afternoon light. Ahead of us is the Musquito Range, with Buffalo Peak serving as another grand landmark in the bewildering assemblage of lofty mountains; and the park, for thirty miles, seemingly as level as a floor, reposes peacefully in its cordon of hills.

At Idlewild our list of travellers is added to—a broad-shouldered young man and a young woman. The boot heels of the young man appear uncomfortably high, and he consequently bears his weight upon his turned-in toes. The new doeskin trousers incase a pair of caliper legs, carrying with them the impression that their owner is astride an invisible something and is not at all accustomed to walking; the Prince Albert is unbuttoned and the white vest is ornamented by a large chain with a silver horse pendant; a low-crowned, broad-brimmed, white felt hat with a wide leather band, is thrown back from a face that is sunburned but smiling; the eyes of the young man are, no doubt, keen even in repose, but there is a shade of embarrassment lingering about them; he evidently feels that everybody in the car understands the situation, and he is ready to be friendly or defiant as occasion may demand. The color in the young woman's cheeks deepens as she smilingly bustles into the only unoccupied seat, and when the couple have settled down there is plenty of room on the end of the seat for another. She has a paper bag

of cookies; she takes a bite from one and reaches it up to him, he absorbs the remainder as complacently as a two-year-old being fed with a spoon. The cookies disappear rapidly after this fashion; meantime a sleeve of the Prince Albert, with an arm in it, has quietly stolen along the back of the seat, and a strong brown hand rests tenderly on the plump shoulder where it has a right to be. A backward look through the car discloses a smile on every face, but our new friends are busy with the sunny prospects of the radiant world just opening up to them, and have forgotten that they are objects of interest. The Major leaning a little toward me, whispers:

"I don't know just what you think of it, my boy, but I hope it will always be sunny for them to the end of the long trail."

From Hill-top, at the western side of the park, our way is well up on the mountain sides along well-timbered gorges. Presently, from the shelf in the gray granite, one may look down into the beautiful valley of the Arkansas. The pioneers and familiars of the neighborhood will tell to this day the delight they would feel on reaching the summit over the old trail, whence they could look into this vale. Sloping from the foot of what is now called Mount Princeton down to the river, is an emerald floor of six miles in width, skirted far to the east by pine-covered mountains; the river winds along the northerly side until it disappears through a gorge in the distant hills. Beyond

Mount Princeton stand gray and solemn the massive piles of Mounts Yale and Harvard, as if they would shut out from intrusion and guard the lovely valley in perpetual tranquillity. From our vantage-point it seems quiet even now, with the busy town just below. Before the advent of the railroads and the multitude, one may understand why the early miners looked upon it as another dwelling-place of the Genius of Peace.

We lodge at Granite, one of the old mining camps, prominent early "in the sixties," and with golden prospects yet. I get a good bed in a room that reminds me of old times; clean, eight feet square, with a pipe running through the floor from the office stove beneath. The pipe is not to be despised, as an addition to one's bedchamber, if one is unaccustomed to a sudden drop to 45° from 90°. As I stand on the doorstep next morning and take a survey of the town, no longer to be called a camp, I conclude that it must have been named Granite because there is less of that rock here than anywhere else in the vicinity.

After breakfast, at which we taste our first trout of the season, we start on a six-mile ride over a splendid road to the lakes. Though we are fairly in the heart of the mountains the way may not be called mountainous; an exaggerated rolling prairie surrounded by magnificent peaks gives a better idea of the land. The air is fresh and cool, the sun is bright, with no sign of clouds save in the direction we are going. Reaching the mesa from

the valley a storm seems to be gathering about the summits of the Twin Peaks and Mount Elbert. Climbing the last rising ground between our starting-point and destination, I find we are upon what I conceive to be a terminal moraine, or the remains of one, and can look down into the grand court where the Ice King, at some remote date, held high carnival; his throne, twenty or more miles away, guarded on either side by peaks over fourteen thousand feet in height; at my feet the ancient floor of his palace, covering an area of six thousand acres or more, no longer solid, but a pair of crystal lakes flashing under the bright rays of the morning sun. The July heat has not yet melted the white helmets on the sentinels' heads, and back of them the clouds I had seen but a little while before, fleecy and drifting in the azure, are gathering volume and blackness. Between them and me a gray mist, driving earthward in perpendicular sheets, tells of the rain coming down; the long lines brushed by the breath of the storm will wave to the right and left, and then drop again straight as a plummet, while the sun's rays here and there flash in the rainbow tints. The background of the sullen clouds begins to pale a little, then breaks, and a great mass of white and gray and rose-tinted vapor rolls majestically to the left, while the main storm, with its artillery in full play, follows south, down the range, and once more lets in the light upon the seat of ancient royalty.

We catch only a few scattering drops while we trot briskly around the south side of the lower lake to the rustic hotel. The landlord takes possession of my grip and I walk off alone to the stream that holds in bond the beautiful lakes; it is barely fifty feet wide by a hundred yards long.

I put my rod together with a coachman on the end of the leader. I had not taken time to soak anything and the kinks were not out, but nevertheless the fly had hardly touched the water before I hooked a ten-inch trout. He gave up readily and I lifted him out with an impression of a good time at hand. But a half-hour's work disclosed not another fin, and I concluded he was the last one there.

Wandering toward the shore of the Upper Lake, I overhauled a man with a cane pole and a bag. I gave him my trout by way of encouragement, as he said he was out of luck, and then I tried the head of the outlet without avail. The man said there were trout in the lakes, but the best way to catch them was to row about with half a dozen poles stuck out at different angles, and "hooks baited with grasshoppers and such-like." I sat on a rock and watched the tints of the Twin Peaks and Mount Elbert mirrored in the smooth water, and prayed for the destroyer, that if he had not already overtaken the pot-hunter, he would; and would burn, not drown him; toast him on a fork and turn him around and toast him some

more; toast him slowly just in sight of the cool, clear waters he had helped to almost ruin. But the government promises to establish a hatchery here and to restock the waters. When that is accomplished what more attractive spot can be found in all these mountains for a summer sojourn for wife, babies and your precious self? It can be made a headquarters, if you wish, and thence you may make easy runs farther into the wilderness. With sweet air, pure water, grand scenery and trouting, what more can mortal ask when he is tired and the baby teething?

Though injured, the lakes are by no means depleted; the fishing is not quite so gratifying as it was twenty years ago, that is all. There are three different varieties of native trout here: the red or salmon-tinted, the lighter-colored variety, and a slender, active trout, different from the denizens of any other waters in the State except, perhaps, Trapper's Lake. The back is a pale green, just the color of the water in the lake, the lateral lines are fine and black, and the spots perfectly round and smaller than the finest shot; it is a graceful fish in its contour, running to three-quarters of a pound in weight, and possessed of excellent fighting qualities.

The State has made an attempt at improving the lakes, and I met the superintendent of the State hatchery here. He said I must go a-fishing. I asked him where, and he said on the lake, if I was not disposed to take a run of a couple of miles

up to the falls, where the fishing was good. I told him what I had heard, that the trouting was nothing to boast of except as the market hunter potted his game. To this he replied that when I came to the lakes I must do as the lakers do. I told him I had not had an oar in my hands for a great many years and was in no humor to be drowned. But he promised to attend to the rowing while I fished. With this assurance and to oblige him I rigged up, under his directions, four pine poles, tied on the lines and fixed up a cast of a coachman for a stretcher and a brown hackle and a gray for droppers. I persuaded him to allow me to take my bamboo, and armed with the implements of torture and my rod, like Hyperion among Satyrs, we stepped into a skiff and started for the lower end of the lake. I stuck out those pine poles with their ten feet of line, two over the stern and one out each side, and sat on the butts. The flies trailed along on the water and I had room to ply the bamboo astern beyond the annoyances floating there. After fifteen minutes of this business, I asked the skipper if he did not think a fellow who called this trouting, ought to drown and go to—sheol. He laughed; I took to praying again and in my earnestness lost one of the poles. Shortly after I had a rise to the coachman on the bamboo and hooked a trout. Inside of two minutes I could not tell whether the fish was on the hook that struck him, or the other three lines, or whether I had four trout in tow.

I found out very soon that there was one trout and four lines snarled. I pulled them all in, took off the trout, untangled the knots and stowed the poles. The man wanted to know whether I had become tired and I told him I had, whereat he proposed to tell everybody that I didn't know how to fish. I said he would oblige me by circulating the report, and that I was mortified only at having tried. With this I sent the coachman astern again and caught another trout; that was all; one trout to the mile. Then I prevailed on him to row me back to the landing at the hotel.

Looking down the lake after a little, I saw the Major bending manfully to his oars and coming home in grand style. When he reached us I discovered among his other trophies of the afternoon, two trout, one weighing four, and the other four pounds and a half.

"You did not go far enough toward the east shore," said the Major; "there is a place about half a mile above the outlet, on that side, where there is grass growing; I never failed in finding good sport there; it is the home of these big salmon-colored fellows. When you hook them they make for the grass below; then, you know, you have business in hand."

Later in the evening, while the Major and I enjoyed our pipes and watched the light of the full moon glimmering on the lake, he wondered what had "come over the Deacon."

Our friend had evidently determined to have

another view of Manitou Park, and I informed the Major of the Deacon's proposition to me.

"Ah! if he were only here!" sighed the Major; "with the lake in front of him, and under this moonlight, or with the shadows of the pines down by the water's edge, and the melody of the miniature breakers to whisper inspirations—eh! old boy, maybe we should lose the Deacon—at least for this trip," he asserted hastily, as if unwilling to commit himself, against experience, and with a knowledge that the sweetest things in life demand a change. "They get tired of us, you know," continued the Major.

"You talk as if the Deacon were in love."

"The symptoms are marked, my boy—he called the other fellow a 'dude,' you say. It looks bad; I fear he'll spoil the biscuit.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE SAGUACHE RANGE.

Much of the way from Granite to Leadville lies close to the Arkansas, and with the level of it, the river being but a few feet below the road. The Major and I conclude to occupy the rear platform and encounter an elderly lady on a camp-stool in possession of the car door. She is here evidently with a view to the scenery. As we squeeze past, we are regaled with an odor of rose leaves, suggestive of old-fashioned bureaus with obstinate drawers, catnip tea and grandmotherly tenderness. The velocity of the railroad train is not to be compared to the speed with which the perfume flashes one back through the decades, to the hard times, and I detect a sigh from the Major as he seats himself upon the car step.

"What are you sighing for, Major?"

With a hasty glance toward the car door: "For the happy times of nearly half a century ago."

"And the rose leaves——"

"Aha!" with a cheerful smile, "you caught the fragrance too, did you, my boy?"

Except for the rumble of the car wheels, silence reigned for five minutes; the Major's meditations

were finally interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Dide, camp-stool in hand. The new arrival had just taken his seat on the side next the Major when the old lady exclaimed in a shrill treble:

"Land sakes! I believe in my heart that crick is runnin' up hill."

Certainly from our level, and running in an opposite direction, the current had that appearance when looked at casually.

Mr. Dide turned toward the lady, stared, and addressed her:

"Begpahdon! But weally that is not phenomenal."

"Eh?"

"It is not unusual foah watah to wun up hill."

"Where was you born and bred, young man?"

"New Yauk."

They were both serious, the old lady, with her head thrown a little forward and inclining to one side, gazing at him over her glasses.

"What's your business?"

"I am a gentleman of lesyah, madam," and for the first time something like a smile hovered about the mouth of Mr. Dide.

"Evidently you was brought up that way—you ain't married, surely?" with a manner implying that though the world were full of feminine fools, he had not discovered one foolish enough to enter into the marriage relation with him. Mr. Dide seemed discomfited, but rallied in a moment.

"Begpahdon! but you know the earth is not a

spheah but a spheaoid, flattened at the poles, and the equatah is a dozen miles hiah than the surface at the poles, and that some of the pwincipal wivahs flow toward the equatah——"

"See here, young man, I don't know as I just rightly understand what you're talkin' about, and I don't think you do yourself. Seems to me you must be one of them chaps that believes his grandfather was a monkey, and lookin' at you I don't know as you're to blame. I've raised nine children, six boys and three girls, all married and settled down 'cept Hannah—she's next to the baby, and I don't know as she ever will; and if I'd had one like you, indeed I'm afraid I'd a-flew into the face of natur and set on him when a baby. Where's your mother? you'd better go to her and let her learn you not to talk to an old woman like me as if I was a fool—there now!"

"Begpahdon, but——"

"Oh, git away with your begp-a-h-don, as you call it——"

"But, my deah madam——"

"But me no buts, and don't dear madam me. I'll tell my Joshua and he'll shake that glass out of your eye for insultin' his mother, he will."

Either the condition of Mr. Dide reflected in the old lady's mind with his eyeglass gone, or his general demoralization under the hands of Joshua, mitigated her indignation; she laughed as she bridled.

"Weally, madam," and Mr. Dide arose, held on

to the guard rail with one hand while he removed his hat with the other, and with a manner that went far toward making his peace, continued: "I should nevah faugive myself if I went away leaving you with the impwession that I intended an insult—believe me, I am incapable."

"Well—don't you try to make anybody believe again that water runs up hill."

"I will not, madam, I assauh you."

"And don't talk as if you was swearin' every time you say *ma*dam. Why don't you say ma'am like a Christian?"

"I will mahm, with plesyah."

"That's right. Set down now, I want to see out. I think somethin' might be made out of you with a little trainin', though mebbe it's too late; 'as the twig is bent the tree's inclined,' you know. What do you carry that little umbrill for, that thing you've got in your hand—don't you know the name of it?"

"Ah, weally—to wahd off the sun and the wain."

"Land sakes—mebbe you think you're sugar and'll melt; and you part your hair in the middle like a gal; I see it when you had your hat off."

"Weally—please excuse me, I would like to pass in."

"Set right down and don't let me drive you away. I've taken an interest in you; where's your mother?"

"Weally, ma—mahm—she has been dead many yeahs—I can just wemember her."

"I know'd it, and you've just been left to grow up of your own accord; been to college of course. 'Squire Dodd he let his Jake go off to college, and he staid just one year and come back with one of them glasses and lost it next day; the ole 'squire kep' him home after that, and set him to maulin' rails in the patch down by the hemlock p'int——"

For half an hour the dear old soul held the disconsolate gentleman in durance. I dared not look at the Major but kept my eyes fixed on the landscape, without seeing any of it.

Reaching Leadville, we searched in vain for the Deacon; his lady friends were also absent, and the Major remarked:

"The Deacon evidently is one point ahead in the game. If he does not turn up in the morning we shall be obliged to abandon him."

Leadville, that has added so many millions to the wealth of the world, is more dignified than half a dozen years ago; there is less of the revolver and saloon and a little more of the church and the Sabbath-school; no longer a mining camp, but a city with only a tithe of its resources developed.

It reposes very quietly this Sabbath morning under the bright sun. Turning from the range at the north with its snow-capped peaks and looking down the almost deserted avenue, I am reminded of another Sunday morning—and it seems only a little while ago—when the same street was wont to be alive with humanity. Coming out of an adjacent saloon a couple of young men faced

each other, blear-eyed and dishevelled; they had plainly been making a night of it. Each stood with his hand on his hip, while epithets, the most choice in the camp vocabulary, flew thick and furious. It might be dangerous or not; perhaps not. But the innocent third party running away or seeking shelter at the side might be in peril. I took up a vibrating station, so to speak, immediately in the rear of one of the would-be murderers, and awaited the opening. It did not come, but ended in froth and the appearance of an autocrat with a star on his breast and a club in his hand. He gathered in the bad men and was about to possess himself of the undersigned, when I felt compelled to explain the situation. He complimented me by saying: "Your head's level," and I was suffered to depart.

From the carbonate metropolis to the tunnel through the Saguache Range the distance by rail is perhaps seventeen miles, the difference in elevation about thirteen hundred feet. To make this distance one can hardly realize that one is ascending, the grade is so light, winding on and about the mountain sides. Lake Valley, with its crooked band of water here and there widening into silvery pools, and the gold and green of its meadow-like spots, seems to be silently drifting down and away. At the foot lies the city we have just left, and beyond is the Mosquito Range. In following the tortuous line the grand peaks seem

to change from one side of you to the other, all the motion being with them.

Mount Massive gives you the aptness of its name. You feel its magnificence as you approach, and that it may be the glorious court of blue-eyed Athena at whose vestibule you stand wonderingly, and whence she issues to kiss the petals of the wild flowers and endow the earth with health and beauty. All about you are the pines, with here and there a patch of aspens, their whitened trunks set in banks of larkspur empurpling the sloping mountain sides. Over deep gorges spanned by threadlike trestle-work, you feel awed at the audacity that planned and executed the way into this solitude. High above the utmost peak of the bulky mass, a spot no larger than your hand is poised in ether, or moving, passes between you and the sun, and you think perhaps of what Tennyson says:

> "He clasps the crag with hooked hands,
> Close to the sun in lonely lands;
> Ringed with the azure world he stands:
> The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls:
> He watches from his mountain walls,
> And like a thunderbolt he falls."

Or as Campbell puts it:

> "And stood at pleasure, 'neath heavens zenith, like
> A lamp suspended from its azure dome,
> Then downward, faster than a falling star,
> He neared the earth, until his shape distinct
> Was blackly shadowed on the sunny ground."

Or older still, as we find it in the Iliad:

"So the strong eagle from his airy height,
Who marks the swans' or cranes' embodied flight
Stoops down impetuous while they light for food
And, stooping, darkens with his wings the flood."

The Major thought he would give Campbell the benefit of his vote, though the old Greek tells us the bird was a robber in his day as he is in ours.

The shriek of the whistle echoes and re-echoes through the impressive silence; it startles you, and you feel as if warned in a weird way by the unseen spirits of these wilds, that you are an intruder. Suddenly you are swept from the bright sunlight, the lofty mountains and modest wild flowers into utter darkness. Your dream of the wise goddess may not be all a dream. You are being hurled, in her anger, from the heavenly heights to the depths of Erebus. Looking out, you see mysterious shadows moving with lights through clouds of smoke, and the lights burn dim and red. There is comfort only in the reflection that mortals have preceded us, and that we are merely in Hagerman Tunnel * and not knocking at the gates of sheol.

In the ghostly light of the car lamp I discover the venerable incubus of Mr. Dide, and inquire what she thinks.

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* Hagerman Tunnel is two thousand two hundred feet in length and penetrates the Saguache Range at an elevation of eleven thousand five hundred and twenty eight feet above sea level.

"Land sakes! it's flyin' in the face of the Almighty. I suppose it's all right, but I kind o' wish I was well out of it and with Joshua. I don't know but I was a little hard on that young man with the umbrill."

The Major, overhearing the wail, immediately entered upon the office of comforter, and had but fairly begun when, swish! and we were in the broad daylight once again, on the western slope of the Saguache Range.

There is a beautiful picture to the right; a few miles away, down the mountain side, you catch a view of a little lake, bordered by a strip of level ground carpeted in gold; back of this grow the pines, reaching on and up to the summits of their homes, made dark and green; and away beyond, delicately toned by the ever-present gray mist, stands a lofty mountain range. The engineer is kindly and pauses here, that you may have a glimpse of the enchanting retreat, over the memory of which you may dream when you are back in the turmoil, and that will make you sigh for the coming summer.

The character of the country through which we are now winding our way down toward the valley is more rugged than on the eastern side. The thickly wooded slopes give place to more frequent piles of granite, massive and gray. We come suddenly upon a little park and find the haymakers busy there, with a team of oxen, a motive power already growing quite novel; a little further over,

where the gorge widens, affording a few acres of comparativley level ground, we find the white tents of the campers-out. There is a newness about the cotton habitations that suggests experiment. There are women in sun-bonnets and calico gowns and a ruddiness of complexion no city air can paint. Children with brown, bare legs scratched by the briars, their cheeks tanned to a russet that affords a contrast to the whiteness of their milk teeth. And these jolly little fellows always greet you with a broad smile and a hurrah that is without feebleness or fever. Young men in long rubber boots, helmet hats decorated with nondescript flies and sporting an endless variety of trout rods. All pause to look at the train, an act to which they would rarely condescend at home. But this one, maybe, brings accessions to their ranks from the outside world, or a newspaper, and serves as a link between what we call civilization and the glorious freedom of the wilderness. A little further on, standing upon the bank of a still reach, we encounter a tall "lone fisherman," dressed in overalls, a waistcoat ragged at the back, an old white felt hat with the battered brim thrown up from his face and drooping behind; in his hand a long cane pole which it makes one's arms ache to look at. But he will come in to-night with that canvas bag swung from his shoulder well filled with trout, and prove to you that the fishing is good. Artificial flies are not indispensable with him; grasshoppers when he can get them, bugs,

grubs, a bit of beef or a strip from the belly of his first trophy of the day, will serve his purpose; he is "after meat" and gets it. What could he do with a fly and that walking-beam?

We reach a cañon whose sides at its mouth are clothed with pines and aspens; the rocks have changed from the granite to red sandstone and great mountains made up of boulders and red clay. The latter have been built here by the waters away back in the untold centuries, and of whose abundance the beautiful crystal stream now brawling over its pebbled bed is but a thread. As the once mighty force has cut its way through all impediments and dwindled century by century to a narrower channel, it has left exposed the great red cliffs; falling still farther, soil has accumulated on the more gentle slopes and has given these Titanic piles broad bases of green interspersed with wild flowers, and the delicate feathers of the clematis here and there twine among the willows. The winds and the rains have bestowed their aid and carved the red mass into castles, buttressed and pinnacled. And so, having traversed one of the grandest gorges in the State and enjoyed a fair view of some of the loftiest mountain peaks and ranges, we slow up in the beautiful valley of the Roaring Fork. The Major declared it was the most delightful ride he had ever taken, and was disposed to enthusiasm.

Loch Ivanhoe.

CHAPTER V.

JOSHUA.

WHILE awaiting the departure of the train from Aspen Junction to Glenwood Springs, one of the dwellers in the neighborhood came up with a string of beautiful trout, the largest of which weighed two pounds. Where did he catch them?

"Why, right over yonder in the Roaring Fork; lots of 'em; a fellow got one the other day that weighed three pounds."

The manner of the informant defied contradiction or doubt.

"Not improbable, my friend. I have landed more than one five-pounder from that same water," said the Major.

"See here, mister, if I'd a-know'd you was goin' to chip in I'd a-made it bigger—the last man hain't no show, that's a fact."

"Honor bright, my friend; I camped here nineteen years ago this summer; five-pound trout were no rarity then."

The Major's tones carried conviction with them, and, mollified, the native admitted he had "heard of bigger ones up the fork."

The ride of twenty-five miles to Glenwood

Springs completed our trip by rail. The next business was to look up a man with a team and wagon. We found him lingering over some old circus posters on a bill-board down a side street, which he seemed reluctant to abandon. He had been recommended to us as a good cook, possessed of a complete camp outfit, and to whom the whole country was an open book.

Mr. Miles was a blue-eyed man of forty, perhaps, with a hint of gray hairs about his temples, broad-shouldered and wearing a pleasant smile. He had been to Trapper's Lake times without number, but he "couldn't get a wagon over the trail."

"If you want to go by wagon, the best way is round by Meeker, and up the White River; it's a hundred and thirty miles, mebbe, while it's only about a day's ride by the trail."

"By Meeker," was our route; we had come to look at the White River Valley; we might return to Glenwood by the trail.

"Meeker it is; then four dollars a day and you find the grub and your own saddle-horses, or ride in the wagon."

After assuring us that he would be back in an hour with "everything ready to roll out for Newcastle," where we were to stop the first night, Mr. Miles took his departure, singing in a delightful tenor, "The sweet by-and-by."

Two hours elapsed and Mr. Miles had failed to put in his appearance. We set out to hunt him

and found his cabin. It was a very neat cabin of logs, hewed to the line, and a rustic porch covered with a wild clematis vine made the place inviting on a warm day. A couple of women in calico gowns and sun-bonnets sat outside picking wild hops from a vine which they had cut off at the roots and brought in bodily. A youngster in slips, regardless of the conventionalities of good society, was standing on his head in the shade of the chimney out of sight of the occupants of the porch. The ground being sandy our approach was unheeded by the women. The hands of one were toil-worn, of the other slender and shapely, but browned by the sun. The Major was about to speak but was forestalled by the imp from the chimney appearing, right side up, with the announcement:

"G'amma! here's men!"

The old lady's face, from her position, was first to be seen, and revealed Mr. Dide's monitress. The other was that of a young woman of twenty, perhaps. As the child spoke the latter raised her hands to the sun-bonnet, and turning toward us, disclosed a very pleasant face with wonderful brown eyes.

"Land sakes! if it ain't you; come in and set down—Hannah, git some cheers."

The Major declined, as we were in a hurry, and inquired for Mr. Miles.

"That's my Joshua, certain. He's gone to hunt his horses; he's been hired to go out campin' with

some tenderfeet, and they are out grazin'; but *do* set down; this is my daughter Hannah," as the young woman returned with the chairs, which she burnished with her apron, though they were entirely innocent of dust.

The Major felt obliged to repeat his excuse; then pleasantly:

"I guess we are the tenderfeet——"

"Now, you don't say!—Land sakes—but you won't mind an old woman's nonsense, will you? Set down, *do;* Joshua'll be here by-'m-by, he greased his waggin just before he went; don't mind the muss—me and Hannah's been savin' these hops, they're better'n any store truck; they're good for yeast; I never could 'bide salt risin' anyway, and for neuralgie, I've suffered with that some, so's Joshua, seems it's in the altitude, that's what the doctors call it, and to my mind there's nothing like a hop piller. Wish you'd set awhile."

The Major assured the good soul that we should be delighted, but really we were anxious to start and had a multitude of trifles to look after. Would she be kind enough to request Joshua not to delay longer than was necessary? and we bowed ourselves away.

The sun went down and Joshua did not appear. At ten o'clock we went to bed with the conviction that we should have to abandon the namesake of the potent commander. About the time we were fairly asleep, he came and assured us, through the door, that he would "be on hand at eight o'clock,

sure, with everything ready." That the horses had "strayed and were not to be found until after dark." We were prompt at the appointed time and waited until nine. The Major was again about to give him up, when he came around with a pair of stout-looking mares and an empty lumber wagon, and announced that he must "go and hunt up an extra spring seat," as we had concluded not to take saddle-horses. He came back in about half an hour, with a seat lying in the wagon, and said he had "a mind" to go after his bedding. The Major suggested that he hurry.

"Oh, I'll be round, you bet."

At ten o'clock he returned with a roll of blankets and we inquired after his camp outfit.

"By the great horn spoon—if I didn't forget all about it; just hold on a minute," and he drove off again. In the course of another half hour he returned with a frying-pan and a broken skillet. We inquired for the plates, cups, knives and other articles supposed to be convenient in camp, including the coffee-pot.

"Well, I lent my coffee-pot to a feller who's gone prospectin' and I don't think he'll be back inside of a week—you've got some canned beans and such like—we can use the cans for coffee, and have a new one every day, and I'm out of plates and cups just now, though if I'd a-knowed it I might 'a borrowed some of Jake."

The Major complimented him on this evidence of cleanliness and economy, and then went off and

purchased the necessary tinware and cutlery. Joshua packed everything snugly and undertook to adjust the borrowed wagon seat. It was found to be too short.

"Well, I swan! but I'll git a seat if I have to steal it—just hold on a minute."

"I think, Mr. Miles," said the Major, "as it is near noon, you'd better drive home and get your dinner and the seat, and call for us in an hour."

"All right, I'll be round on time—hannup, Woman, get on, Baby—we're not goin' to camp here.

"'There's a land that is fairer than day,
And by faith we can see it afar,
For the Father waits over the way,
To prepare us a dwelling place thar,
In the sweet by-and-by.'"

"That man and his song match well," said the Major, as Joshua disappeared around the corner and the refrain died away, "'my dukedom to a beggarly denier' he does not get back until too late in the day to start. I wonder if he is not trying to make an extra day in his count?"

At two o'clock he returned, but had not succeeded in obtaining a seat. He stood before the Major with eyes cast down and his forefinger on his chin, evidently in deep communion with himself.

"I wonder, now, where I can get a seat—lemme see—Bowers' got a waggin same as mine, but he started yesterday with a load to Newcastle. Ben

Soggs—no! his is broke. Lemme see — Pat McGinnis—no, he's usin' his every day——"

"Suppose you buy one—is there not a wagon shop in the city?" said the Major.

"Well, I swan! I hadn't thought of that—just hold on a minute."

In the course of half an hour he returned with the announcement that he had found a seat, but the man wanted five dollars and a half, "second hand, and that's a dollar'n a half more'n it's worth, and——"

"Well, get it, we'll stand the dollar and a half."

"All right—just hold on a minute."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when we started. We were blessed with several friends in Glenwood; they manifested much interest in our preparations for departure, and, as they had a number of resident acquaintances, the sidewalk was well peopled by the time we climbed into the wagon. Looking over that sea of faces, as I remember it now, every one was lighted up with a broad smile, which resolved itself into a laugh, with a hearty good-by and wishes for luck, together with the request that we "leave some of the game on the White," and would "not kill it all."

We smiled in return, and I felt that I should be happy if Mr. Miles' shoulders were not so broad and I had his head in chancery.

"Where do you propose camping to-night, Mr. Miles?" inquired the Major as we reached the bridge across the Grand River.

"Lemme see—it's fifteen miles to Newcastle, pretty good road, we can make that in three hours with the load we've got; then it's about fourteen miles to Rifle Creek, but there's muskeeters. We might stop at Ferguson's, that's about ten miles beyond Newcastle; that's a good place."

"But it will be quite dark by that time."

"Yes, that's a fact, it will be quite dark by that time."

"Well, it is not very pleasant to make camp in the dark."

"No, that's a fact; you're right about that—'tain't pleasant to make camp in the dark."

"What will you do?"

"Lemme see—we was goin' to stop at Newcastle, wasn't we? that's a good place."

"To camp, do you mean?"

"Yes, good place to camp, or there's a good hotel—we might stop at the hotel over night and take a fresh start in the morning."

"How far is it from Newcastle to Meeker?"

"Fifty-five miles,—hannup, Woman! we won't camp here!"

"That's rather a long drive for one day?"

"You're right, it is—but we can make it, with the load we've got—Baby! come out o' that!"

"It would be better not to try."

"You're right—we might camp at Morgan's, t'other side of the Divide, if you want to, that's more'n half way."

"Very well, we'll make Newcastle to-night, Mor-

gan's to-morrow night, and reach Meeker the next day—say at what hour?"

"Oh, anywhere before dark, easy."

"Well, we'll see if you can make it."

"Oh, I'll make it, or break a trace!"

The "pretty good road" between Glenwood and Newcastle had recently been traversed by a herd of cattle and seemed the paradise of loose stones. The Grand was muddy, as it frequently is, from the mining on the Blue River and a recent storm. But there is enough beauty in the scenery to compensate one for the roughness of the road, which Joshua seemed to make more rugged by hitting all the rocks in the way.

When we reached Newcastle, Joshua drove up to the hotel and the landlord put in an appearance.

"Why do you stop here, Mr. Miles?" inquired the Major.

"This is a good place to stop, and I thought you said you'd stop here to-night and take a fresh start in the mornin'?"

"We purpose to have an outing, Mr. Miles, and although the hotel may be excellent, we will go into camp just below here on Elk Creek."

There was a decisiveness about the Major's tones not to be misunderstood. Mr. Miles turned around to get a better view.

"All right, just as you say—hannup, Woman! Baby!"

He kept silent until we reached the creek, when

I made a remark about its beauty, then Joshua broke out:

"Fresh from the throne of glory
Bright in its crystal stream."

At the first verse the sternness vanished from the Major's face; he could not resist the inclination to laugh; the laugh was contagious; Joshua turned in his seat with a look of inquiry, and halting in his song, joined us.

"How d' you know the name of the creek, Major?"

"I have been here before, Mr. Miles."

"Oh! How long you lived in this country, Major?"

"Thirty years, next spring."

"No? Then you're a mossback sure enough——

'Tell me the old, old story,
Of unseen things above.'"

"Are you a member of the church, Mr. Miles?"

"Why, I ain't never just professed, exactly—what makes you ask that?"

"Your familiarity with the Gospel hymns."

"Mebbe you don't like 'em——"

"Quite the contrary, Mr. Miles—I not only like them, but your singing."

"Oh, give us a rest, Major—you can't blame me for takin' you for tenderfeet with them knee-breeches."

"What did you pay for this wagon-seat, Mr. Miles?"

"Four dollars,—honest Injun."

"I think we understand each other, Mr. Miles?"

"George Washington and his hatchet—I've felt for some time's if I wanted to kick myself for bein' a fool."

The footing being established, Joshua drew up in a grassy spot near some scrub oaks.

"Just rest easy, gentlemen, till I git this team unhitched, and I'll look after the supper, and put up the tent while you're eatin' it."

"We have only a fly, and will not need that to-night."

"That's an offset to the knee-breeches; if I'd only knowed it! You don't care for a tent, even?

'The proper study of mankind is man.'"

I suggested to the Major that he try the creek,—perhaps he could get a mess of trout for breakfast. He adopted the suggestion, and when we called him, half an hour afterward, he came with five good-sized trout. Not contented with his success, after supper he went to the mouth of the creek and hooked a pound-and-a-half fish, which he brought in with much gratification.

Joshua seemed endowed with new life; he was out of bed next morning and had breakfast prepared before we were fairly awake; by seven o'clock we were on the road. The coach on its way to Meeker passed us shortly after we had started, and would reach its destination by five o'clock. Joshua admitted that he had more than once made

the trip in one day from Glenwood with a light wagon and a good team.

The country between Newcastle and Rifle Creek is blessed with spacious mesas covered with black sage brush. Here and there these acres are under ditch and cultivation, attesting that the uninviting uplands, with the aid of water, can be converted into beautiful farms. We crossed Rifle Creek, up and over a broad mesa to Dry Rifle, and found ourselves in a neighborhood by no means attractive. Sage brush, cactus and greasewood, inhabited by magpies and an occasional raven, do not tend to inspire one with pleasant fancies. The soil is adobe, the gulch contracted and hot, and water to be thought of only; the sage brush had assumed dignity and grown into trees. But the arroyo soon widened and gave us a view of pleasantly wooded low hills, and a cool breeze greeted us. The road was good, and we trundled along in cheerfulness, Joshua aiding at intervals with a lively air from the Gospel Collection, or stimulating us with the assurance that game was plenty "back among them hills." We took a lunch about noon but found the water warm and slightly impregnated with alkali; at Morgan's, where we went into early camp, the water was better.

After crossing the Divide, and before we reached our camping-place, the country had improved decidedly; the grass was fresher and more abundant, and the wild flowers added to the attraction of the slope along which we were travel-

ling; the distant hills were bountifully dotted with aspen groves and openings—suggestive to one accustomed to the haunts of deer. Gaps in the hills immediately skirting our way would reveal small parks, beautifully green, and the entrance to them usually guarded by picturesque rocks. In one of these projections a dromedary was conspicuously outlined, with its head carried to the life. In another a hippopotamus was wallowing up from a sandstone bed. In another the form of a woman half reclining in a high-backed chair, while immediately in front was a figure in an attitude of supplication. The afternoon sun shining fairly upon this group gave us a good view of the features in profile; other rocks immediately in front and to the right of the principal figure, were readily constructed into groups bearing a human resemblance, and the Major at once gave the place the name of the Queen's Court. Many have passed this way, no doubt, and have seen a medley of rocks, while others may have enjoyed with us the distinction of an audience with royalty. Balancing Rock, however, cannot escape the attention of the most indifferent.

We finally caught a glimpse of a bit of the White River Valley through the gorge toward which we were moving: a beautiful stretch of meadow-like land reaching up to timber-clothed mountains. The view continued to expand until we arrived at the border of the stream. The way wound among willows and mountain beech, with

a few scrub oaks, now and then an alder bush, and what Joshua termed haw bushes, bringing us suddenly to the margin of the river. The water was perfectly clear and cold, with the brush growing close down to the edges of the banks; just above the ford was a pool in which the Major was as sure there were trout as that the sun shone. It did seem, indeed, that the fish must find delightful habitation in every foot of water in sight. We crossed and made camp, and it was not long before the Major verified his prediction. From that same pool, within a hundred feet of the ford where people were crossing nearly every hour of the day, he brought in two trout that more than sufficed for our supper.

"The stream is just alive with them, my boy—you will have trouting such as you never had before."

CHAPTER VI.

ON WHITE RIVER.

Two miles, about, below our camp is that part of the valley where the Ute Indian Agency was situated a few years ago. Here it was that the pot-bellied potentate Colorow and his horde of tatterdemalions cruelly murdered agent Meeker, captured and carried away women and children, and committed other unprovoked atrocities—receiving, as an inducement for further outrages, additional government subsidies and comfort. The soil which these "red brothers" refused to cultivate now glitters in a garb of golden grain; they killed their best guide and friend, who never had for them other than kind words and fatherly admonitions, because it required work to change the product from sage brush to wheat. If a man should undertake to harness an adult grizzly to a plough the world would consider him weak and fail to mourn his death, though he would be on a par with the governmental "policy" touching the Indian. A century of failure should, it would seem, convince even a nation that there were defective cogs in its policy wheel.

But the Major suggests that I drop the subject,

unless I desire to write a volume on a disease that I cannot cure. He says it is like any other botch, spoiled in the beginning of its existence, and it would be impossible now "to lick into shape."

"It is only a matter of time when our 'red brother' will cease to be, and our disgrace will culminate at his final departure. We are out for fish and our own reformation only."

Now that we are on the stream that we started in search of, there is no occasion to hurry. We have with us all the necessary accessories to comfortable housekeeping; our time is our own, and we enjoy a solid independence of landlords, railroads or stage-coaches. A house would be an incumbrance and finger-bowls as superfluous as a piano. Do you know what it is to be free, absolutely oblivious to care, past or prospective; with no apprehension touching the condition of your linen, the set of your necktie or the volume of your trousers at the knees? If not, go camping. The destitution of polish on your shoes and the holes in your hat become luxurious, as you view the one through the other while you lie on your back in the shade and pull down the "old felt" to screen your eyes from the brilliancy of the blue roof under which you are loafing. Each month thus invested will add six months to each year; toward the end of your time you will realize this, and find your joints supple to a ripe old age.

The next morning at breakfast the Major re-

quested me to do the fishing for the day's supply; he desired to go prospecting.

"You have not wet a line since we started; you had an opportunity at Elk Creek and here, also, last night. I thought you were fond of angling?"

"So I am, but catching fish does not constitute my view of angling; it is only one of the pleasures that awaits in the vestibule of the temple. A beautiful attendant merely who induces us into the inner sanctuary."

"We'll shake hands on that, my boy," exclaimed the Major.

Joshua, who ate with us at our solicitation, stopped his cup of coffee half way to his mouth and stared at me.

"I'll get a gunny-sack full, if you want 'em, Major,—can do it in half a day," said Joshua, sipping his coffee.

"We would rather you did nothing of the sort, Mr. Miles," and the Major's manner was somewhat testy; "we could make no use of them—the time of plenty is the time to save—you've heard that before, no doubt, or something like it?"

"Oh, yes, I've heard mother say that many a time."

"I thought so—a mother's advice is always good, and you can apply it to fish and other game."

"All right, just as you say."

The Major started off to the hills with his Winchester. Joshua concluded he would stay around camp and "square things up." One of the horses

had stepped on the new coffee-mill and ruined it, and he must look out for another. The principal feature of the new coffee-mill was a piece of clean board about a foot square; the other part of the complication consisted of a tin can. He placed the coffee on the board and rolled it fine with the can: the board, being the important part, in the absence of carpenter shops and sawmills, was the portion fractured, of course.

I put my rod together and adjusted the reel. The leader and flies had been in soak for an hour and were in good condition; I had selected a coachman, a red-bodied gray hackle and a brown cofflin to test in prolific water a theory of mine. The White River in the fifty or more miles we experimented is the ideal of a trout stream. From our camping-place for thirty and odd miles to the cañon of the South Fork is a series of riffles, deep swirls under bushy banks, pools and comparatively still reaches. The willows and other shrubs are so thick that the opportunity for casting from the shore is happily exceptional. There is no satisfactory alternative but to pursue the best method. The stones are clean beyond those in any stream which I ever waded, and the prospect of a wetting from smooth rubber boots and rocks a remote possibility. To avoid the places too deep to wade, crossing and recrossing the riffles becomes a necessity; these opportunities seem to lie at such convenient and appropriate distances that admiration for the skill of the Designer is irresistible; one

takes to the dancing crystal with a love for it, and a reverence for its Presiding Genius. There is a feeling of exultation as one enters and stands solitary in mid-stream and looks down the flashing current; the surging of the water, as it takes his limbs into its cool embrace, whispers a greeting of welcome; hid by the growth upon either side one feels no longer alone, the water-sprites are with him in loving communion and sympathy.

So standing and happily surrounded, I commissioned the gray hackle, at the end of my leader, to ascertain what might be lurking in the shade of the opposite bank, where the current was swift and the water four feet deep, at least. It was taken at once, and inside of five minutes I had a trout of a pound's weight safe in the landing-net. As soon as possible after hooking him, I had drawn away from his hiding-place and coaxed him into shallower and quieter water, so that his neighbors, if he had any, might not be disturbed. After placing him in the creel, I changed the hackle for the coachman and it was taken as readily, the fish being a mate to the first. A third cast resulted in a failure, a fourth brought a rise, a little more line and at the fifth the fly alighted in the acceptable spot, and was taken by a still larger fish.

Changing the coachman for the cofflin, I waded down, close under the bushes of the right bank, crossed a riffle and dropped the fly just where the water slowed up a little, at the foot. It had scarcely touched the surface when I saw the gap-

ing jaws of an apparent leviathan close upon it; at the same instant I struck and the bamboo bent to its work. A leap clear from the water advised me that I had one of the lighter-colored variety and consequently more of a fight on my hands. Five minutes, however, at a guess, sufficed to bring him into the net. He weighed, an hour afterward by my pocket scales, a scant one and three quarter pounds. I lengthened the line a little and brought out another of nearly a pound. If the trout were to keep up to these weights, for only a little while, there would be waste in camp, and I wished for a few smaller. But they did not come to me; either of the next three would weigh three-fourths of a pound, and going back to the slight opening in the brush, through which I entered, I climbed out and returned to camp.

Joshua received the creel and examined its contents.

"You and the Major seem to have the same notions; I thought you would fill up that basket and string a lot on a willer."

"There are quite eight pounds,—sufficient for two meals."

"Yes, I know, but how do you manage to stop? When the fish bite that way I want to catch 'em."

Thereupon I read a homily to Joshua on the art of angling, at the conclusion of which he said he understood what I had told the Major in the morning about the "inner sanctuary."

"That is, I have an idea about it—mebbe I'll

try it some day; but this is such a dog-on hard world to get along in and buy shoes for the baby! I'm afraid I can't get into your way—a fellow can't live on scenery, you know, and 'tain't easy for old dogs to learn new tricks. But I'll try and not make a trout hog of myself, as you call it, anyway—I think I can manage that much."

He went off with my fish and creel toward the river, singing, and I flattered myself on having made a partial convert.

Just before noon the Major returned, warm and tired, and sought solace of his pipe. He brought with him two willow grouse with their heads shot off. He had found a coal mine in the bluffs above us, near the town, and had discovered other flattering indications of future wealth for those inclined to pick them up. He had also started two deer, "within fifty yards," during his tramp.

"Where are they?" inquired Joshua.

"Over in those hills, I presume," answered the Major, with a nod toward the supposed locality.

"Why! didn't you kill nary one?"

"Nary one."

"Well, I swan—what's the good of carrying a rifle?"

"What's the good of killing what you don't need?"

"Gentlemen, excuse me, I don't mean any offence, but I'm durned if you ain't the queerest pair of cranks in the huntin' and fishin' way, I ever see. I don't know, but mebbe you're right

about it, still I can't get it through my hair. Of course, I don't believe in wastin' meat, *but*, I'd 'a' *had* to shot them deer."

"Mr. Miles, you ought to live where there is one deer to a township and a trout to a mile of water —you'd change your mind and want to hang the man who talked as you do."

"How'll you have the grouse cooked, Major—stewed or fried?"

"Either way."

Joshua served them up to us roasted, and they were delicious.

Loitering by the road later in the afternoon I saw the coach on the opposite side of the river, before it came down into the bottom-land. There was a passenger on the box with an umbrella. I waited and recognized Mr. Dide, who had added a fishing-rod to his luggage.

"Weally!—dwivah, stop a moment. I am delighted to see you; do you live in the vicinity?"

I informed him that the camp was just below, and we should be pleased to have him call.

"Chawming—thanks; I shall be delighted to drop in."

He did so, just before supper, very much to the astonishment of Joshua and the surprise of the Major. I had forgotten to apprise my friend of the new arrival and of the invitation I had extended. I also confessed a little wonder to myself at the gentleman's prompt fulfilment of his promise, but was none the less gratified.

"I have heard" (it is impossible to spell the word as he pronounced it) "of Meekah, you know, and the twouting, and thought it would be quite novel to wun ovah. The wide was not vewy inviting, but this is chawming—think so?"

Mr. Dide was so truly delighted with the novelty of his experience, and so full of anxiety to make it known, that he was permitted to run on without interruption. Hitherto he had seemed reticent, now he was overflowing in the opposite direction.

"I've nevah twouted, you know, but I shall twy. I bought a pole and some widiculous-looking flies."

The Major suggested that I knew something about the sport, and would, no doubt, assist him in gratifying his ambition. Of course I would, and did. My office of mentor was not devoid of pleasant incidents. He was to call in the morning, with his tackle, and did so immediately after breakfast. He was not prepared to wade, and I borrowed the Major's boots without leave. The rod was a cheap specimen of ash and lancewood, and the dealer had been fair with him in the matter of line, leaders and flies. The Major will bring down the scales at two hundred, Mr. Dide at one hundred and twenty-five pounds, at a guess; in the Major's boots Mr. Dide, I must confess, appeared at a disadvantage. I adjusted his tackle, even to the winding of the line on the little brass reel above the grip, and led the way to the scene of my own recent exploits.

Mr. Dide, upon entering the water, affirmed that it was cold; there was no gainsaying his assertion. He expressed a doubt of his ability to keep his feet, and I endeavored to assist him. He tossed his fly in the direction I suggested, allowed the point of the rod to drop and the fly floated at the edge of the swirl. I admonished him to hold his rod up; at the same instant a trout hooked himself, the little reel spun round and Mr. Dide exclaimed in great exultation:

"I have got him! I have got him!"

"But you will not keep him long, Mr. Dide, if you do not check the line."

"Aw—but I cawn't, you know—oblige me!" and he held out his umbrella toward me. The trout in the meantime was having his own way; the line was fast disappearing from the reel; suddenly it slacked, his troutship was returning, and rapidly. I supported Mr. Dide by seizing the back of his collar with one hand and relieved him of the umbrella, directing him to reel in the line. The fish was without doubt fatally hooked. Mr. Dide, laboring at the crank with a vigor that would have given a hundred revolutions a second to an ordinary grindstone, succeeded in retrieving the slack. As he did so the fish gave a leap half out of the water, and a struggle that brought the butt of the rod in contact with the fisherman's stomach. Something snapped—it was the tip. Still the hook held, the line could be trusted; if the leader and snell proved true the fish might yet be saved.

I directed Mr. Dide to give no more line, but simply to hold the remains of his rod firmly and to stand still, if he could. He endeavored to follow instructions, and I took up my station a little lower down and to one side in shallower water, watching the brave exertions of the quarry to free itself. I bethought me that the umbrella, in the absence of my landing-net, might be put to profitable use. As the fish came my way I suddenly scooped him up from behind, together with an umbrella nearly full of water; the trout went over the edge some time before I could empty the novel device.

"That's the most extwaawdinawy pwoceeding I evah witnessed!" exclaimed Mr. Dide.

Certainly it was beyond anything in my own experience. I concluded that the only way to save the fish was to get to the bank. Mr. Dide declined my offer to take his rod, for which I commended him, but he was doubtful of his ability to stem the current and manage his tackle without my assistance, so I led him ashore and he dragged the trout. Seizing my opportunity, when the nearly exhausted victim was quiet, I lifted him out by the leader. He had hooked himself through the tongue, and so deeply that, notwithstanding his struggles, the wound was but little enlarged, and the use of a knife was required to release him.

Mr. Dide was so much delighted at his success that the damage to his rod was a matter of little

importance. He would have continued to fish with the remains of it, but that I convinced him of the impossibility of casting a fly without a tip. He returned to camp and soon came back with the extra one. I concluded to prospect for openings in the brush. Having found one with a promising little eddy below it, I indicated the best place, in my judgment, at which the fly should be delivered. Mr. Dide undertook the feat and the fly caught in the willows behind him. I released it and the next effort resulted in a good hold upon the umbrella, which the gentleman insisted upon keeping over his head. I was constrained to advise him that the umbrella would better be put aside; he surrendered it to me hesitatingly, as if he might be at a loss without it. He splashed the fly into the water within a rod of the place I had suggested, but that was of no importance; a trout took it in a moment and in the next was flying high in air and eventually became entangled in the brush. I wondered whether first efforts were ordinarily attended with the results I had witnessed, or whether my *protégé* were specially skilled in awkwardness. After he had placed me and my apparel in jeopardy several times I took the rod and endeavored to show him how to make a cast; then I did not blame him so much. But he felt encouraged, and I betook myself to camp, leaving him to work out his own salvation. He came back before noon with the two trout; his rod was broken again and he was very wet, having evidently been up to his neck in water.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE SOUTH FORK.

THE particulars of the disaster to Mr. Dide and what led up to it were brief:

"I hooked a vewy big twout—he would have weighed ten pounds——"

"No, no, Mr. Dide——" interrupted the Major.

"Pon honah!"

"The speed with which you have become proficient as a fisherman is something marvellous, Mr. Dide. Ten-pounders in this water are not within the memory of the oldest inhabitant."

"Weally, he was twice as big as the one we hooked this mawning——"

"Then he must have weighed not quite three pounds, Mr. Dide. The only sure way is to catch your fish and weigh him on the scales."

"Major! Major! think of the penalty provided against that sort of wit."

"It was not so intended, I assure you, my boy."

"But, weally, he must have weighed moah than thwee pounds, Majah, he was so big and he smashed the pole, you know! I hooked him, and he stwuggled violently for a gweat while, and when I sought to pull him out the pole bwoke; he lay on the

watah and I sought to secuah him by going in myself and catching him in my hands; it was vewy cold, 'pon honah; he moved away and I followed him into a hole, but he eluded me."

"My dear sir, you're quite as intrepid as Kit North. You will make an angler, certainly."

"Thanks—vewy much delighted, I assuah you. I have been devising another method of casting the fly, majah. I find it vewy difficult, and it makes my ahms ache. I think I will take a piece of aldah and make a pop-gun and pop the fly out. Did you evah twy it?"

"I never did; with the pop-gun and umbrella you will revolutionize the science of angling."

"No? weally? But the umbwella was not my device, you know," Mr. Dide modestly protested.

"Still, you made the project possible."

"Think so?"

"Do you shoot, Mr. Dide?"

"Aw, a little. I have pwacticed some with a Winchestah, at a tawget, you know."

The Major deemed it advisable to admonish the gentleman that it would be well for him to seek a change of clothing, or at least to wring out his garments and hang them on the bushes to dry. The latter part of the suggestion was rejected as impossible—"somebody might come, you know" —notwithstanding the Major offered him the use of a rubber coat during the emergency. Mr. Dide therefore trudged off toward the town, leaving an impression, to one ignorant of the cause, that a

miniature sprinkler had just passed over the road. After his departure I informed the Major that the gentleman had intimated a desire to accompany us during the remainder of our trip.

"If you can stand it, I can, my boy."

We broke camp and passed through Meeker early the following morning. The town—the site of the old military post—is pleasantly situated on a level place in the valley, skirted on one side by low hills and on the other by the river, from which rises a steep bluff; on the summit of this stands the remains of an adobe signal station, profiled against the background of sky. There is a square in the town, and surrounding it the adobe buildings erected by the government, but now utilized by the peaceful citizens as dwellings or stores. Indians are not presumed capable of bombs, mortars or big guns, and, of course, in selecting a military post with a view to their methods and capabilities a valley with water is better than a hill-top without. The country is rich with ripening grain, and every available acre is either being prepared for cultivation or is actually under tillage. The mountains that border all this valley are low and many covered with timber to their summits. Between the gaps of the closer hills one may discover glades opulent in pasturage.

Near noon we lunched at an excellent spring a little way from the forks of the river. We were overtaken here by Mr. Dide on horseback, for whom we had left, at the hotel, an invitation to

join us. He had provided himself with a new rod and a pair of blankets. What the settlers thought of a man on horseback, with a glass in his eye and an umbrella over his head, riding through the country, has not yet transpired. He had experienced some difficulty at the start; the horse, objecting to the extraordinary equipment of the rider, had endeavored to throw him off, but failing in that, ran away. The dogs also had added to his discomfiture by making frequent sorties, threatening his legs and vociferously assailing the heels of his steed. Mr. Dide had, however, survived all impediments and came up smiling.

The valley of the South Fork is somewhat narrower than that of the main river through which we had come. The brush marks the course of the stream on the left, and beyond it the mountains rise gradually for perhaps two thousand feet, while to the right they reach about the same altitude. The aspen groves are abundant, their lighter green foliage being interspersed with the darker hue of the pines, clothing the sloping hillsides from the base to the summit. The road is smooth and we can trot the horses readily. At times we are close to the river and again half a mile away. Coming to a great clump of bushes on the left, a family of willow grouse was flushed from the grass near the road-side; there were six in the flock, and the major potted four of the young ones, they having alighted in the adjacent trees. We had gathered up the birds and

gone but a little way when Joshua cried out excitedly:

"Look at her! look at her! right ahead there, in the road. Where's the rifle—gimme the rifle!"

Not two hundred feet from us stood a magnificent doe, broadside on, and an easy shot for the veriest tyro that ever pulled trigger. Instead of bringing the rifle to bear or giving it to Mr. Miles, the Major waved his hat and shouted. The beauty ceased staring at us and bounded away gracefully toward the aspens on the right.

"What'n thunder!—Major! you do beat all, that's a fact. Did anybody ever see such a pretty shot!" exclaimed Joshua regretfully and with an expression of disgust.

"Mr. Miles, you should understand, as well as the rest of us, that it is against the law to kill does at this time; it is the close season, and I have no doubt she has a suckling fawn hid not a hundred yards away. We'll have no law-breaking; if we need venison we will take one with horns, not kill the mother and leave the babies to starve. Think of it, man; think of the cruelty of it!"

"Hannup, Woman! ga'lang, Baby," was the only response from Joshua. It came with vigor; disgust pervaded his entire system. We passed the clump of willows, when Mr. Dide, who was trotting along behind, exclaimed:

"Aw, Majah! look theah."

Turning, we saw a buck that had just made its way out of the cover, running swiftly across the

road and making for the mountain side. Joshua brought down his whip upon the horses with his usual admonition to them, but given in a tone that indicated a determination to eschew venison or even the thought of it. The Major smiled with the satisfaction of a man who realizes having made an impression. Reaching the foot of a slight rise the horses were permitted to slacken their pace, and silence reigning at the time, Joshua broke out with one of his familiar hymns:

"Almost persuaded."

"I would rather you were fully persuaded, Mr. Miles," said the Major when the singer had concluded the first stanza.

"All right—here she goes."

Joshua seemed to rise to his best effort, and was unexpectedly joined by Mr. Dide in an excellent bass.

"Well!" said the Major, as the song was concluded, "our lines seem to have fallen in pleasant places, sure enough. I was not aware of the hymn, however."

"If all the hunters that come over here lived up to your way, Major, we'd have to kill the deer in self-defence."

"You believe, however, that my way is the right way, don't you?"

"Yes, I do—hannup, Woman."

Later in the afternoon we came to what is known as the "Still Water." A subsequent examination

of this place in the stream impressed me as being caused by the peculiar formation of the bed-rock. An idea of it may be imparted by taking a dozen shingles and laying them on a level, as you would upon a roof, with the butts lapping a couple of inches only. Consider this the bed of a river with the water flowing over it from the thin end of the shingles, the butts being from three or four feet to ten in thickness. At each butt, or where the rock breaks abruptly, there is a scarcely perceptible motion of the water; immediately beneath is a deep hole, growing shallower as the next butt is reached; then follows another hole; there are several miles of this water in which the current is barely noticeable; the banks are four and five feet from the surface, which is as smooth as glass. The willows grow thickly on both sides of the stream, with breaks at intervals that give one access to it.

Joshua, who was familiar with the vicinity, pronounced Still Water "a dandy place to fish," but we did not stop, except to permit the Major to possess himself of two more grouse, the birds being abundant. We made camp before dark near the mouth of the cañon.

Immediately opposite is a perpendicular bluff of rocks two hundred feet high, or more; slight projections here and there in the face of it serve as footholds for a few hardy bushes, a cluster of wild flowers, or a matted vine; nearer the summit are dwarfed pines. The river sweeps along the foot of this wall; distilled from its near mountain

springs, it is as clear as crystal, and, dashing from the shadows of the adjacent cañon, is, as Mr. Dide expresses it, "*vewy* cold." On the side of the river where our camp lies the valley extends very gradually up and back to the neighboring hills. The grass is bountiful and rich, and we have a cluster of young pines under which we may lounge in the heat of the day. Looking down the course of the river the valley becomes wider, and we have an open view of mountains and green slopes for miles. At our first night's camp in this secluded spot, when the fire has burned low and casts fitful shadows against the opposite cliff, we find ourselves with our feet due north as we lie in our blankets. There is a peculiar charm in the bed of fragrant twigs, with nothing to shut off our vision of the fretted roof. We may gaze out of our shadowy environment into the faces of the bright gems and hold hallowed communion with their mysteries. The liquid voices of the Naiads in their revels sweep gleefully toward me and then away again in softest cadence. The north star and the Dipper grow bright, then indistinct, then revive and grow dim again, as the gentle sprites brush my eyelids tenderly with their downy wings and soothe me into sweet forgetfulness. Some time in the night I awoke; the Dipper had moved, or rather we had moved, and the constellation was no longer in sight. The silence was broken only by the heavy breathing of my nearest companion, the Major, and the hymn from the

river. As its notes rose and fell its somnolent influence took me gently in charge again. The "to-hoo—to-hoo" of an owl interrupted the spell for a moment; I saw him in my mind's eye solemnly staring into the darkness, and I was gone before he had concluded the second call.

When I awoke again it was daylight and I raised on my elbow to take in my fellows. Joshua lay rolled in his blankets under the cluster of pines. Mr. Dide looked thin and singular without his eyeglass. His nose had reached the peeling stage under the influence of the sun, and was decorated with ragged bits of skin, as if it had been caught in a shower of tattered tissue-paper. The Major, with his hat tied over his head, bore marks of the out-door life and slept like a child. I turned out quietly, as the sun crept over the hills, slanting its glad rays against the opposite cliff, and when they touched the swirling water at its foot, I put my rod together, with a coachman on the end of the leader, and walked a dozen paces to a little gravel bar.

I had never before tried the denizens of our mountain streams at so early an hour, and was doubtful of securing anything for breakfast. I sent the coachman over into the swirl and hooked a trout at once; landing him safely, I tried for the second and secured him. Just below me a few rods the river made an abrupt bend, and a great boulder there had accumulated a quantity of drift, under which was a promising pool. I tried the pool with flattering success, landing three fish,

either of which would weigh half a pound. Another cast, a little nearer a log that constituted the main support of the rubbish, and a beautiful salmon-tinted trout rolled up to the fly and was caught. The water was swift, and he caused me some uneasiness by making directly for his lurking-place; if he ever reached the snags that had heretofore afforded him shelter, or the line should foul in the vibrating branches of some drift that swung in mid-stream between us, he was no longer mine. To keep him from his hiding-place I took the risk of refusing him line, merely dropping the point of the rod a little in his more violent struggles; to avoid the nearer brush I went into the water and succeeded in getting below that difficulty. I realized Mr. Dide's conclusion of the temperature, and felt that his adverb was altogether inadequate—a dead failure, in fact; it demanded adjectives in quantity and force. The water reached my knees, and I feared if it rose any higher I should be compelled to take to the bank; rubber boots afford some protection in such emergencies and temper the chill. I had only a light pair of old shoes devoted to camp use in dry weather. Having attained an advantageous position, I succeeded in coaxing his troutship completely away from danger into slower water, and learning that he was securely fastened, I had no apprehension of the result. I allowed him to fight until he was quite exhausted, and then drew him up to and upon the small bar at the edge of

which I had been standing. I must weigh him, surely, then and there; and by the pocket scales he brings down the indicator to two pounds and two ounces, and, for "a red feller," he had offered more than ordinary resistance.

There was an abundance for breakfast, and twenty minutes had sufficed to cover the time from my leaving the camp. I gathered up my spoils, strung them on a willow twig and returned. The sleepers had not changed their attitudes, and I gave them the benefit of a morning bell after the manner of an Indian war-whoop. The Major merely opened his eyes, Mr. Dide was startled, and Joshua took in the situation calmly.

"Arise, ye sluggards, and see the result of twenty-minutes' work on the South Fork of the White!"

"I'll discount that before noon," said the major, throwing off his blankets.

While the Major and Mr. Dide made their way to the water's edge with soap and towel, Joshua appealed to me confidentially. He wanted to know why the Major had brought "that Winchester."

I suggested that he might have intended it for bear.

"But see here, now, can't you persuade him to kill a deer, or to let me have the rifle? I see that he keeps the ca'tridges fastened up in that box of his, or stowed in his pockets."

Plainly the Major and Joshua understood each other upon the question of game, but I consoled him by agreeing to comply with his wishes.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPORT.

WITHIN two miles of us was a ranch, where we knew there were several men. While discussing breakfast, I prefaced my request to the Major by intimating these facts, and hinting that a taste of venison would serve as a change from trout and grouse. The Major looked at me and then at Joshua, who was busy over the fire, but attentive.

"Those men will help us dispose of a deer, if you get one."

"Very likely, if they haven't got a supply on hand."

"Suppose you inquire."

"Well, I'll think of it," looking again in Joshua's direction.

"If you'll just leave some of them ca'tridges where I can lay hands on 'em, I'll get some venison," Joshua broke in, giving a trout in the frying-pan an extra turn and pressing the centre down with his knife.

"No doubt," and the Major's visage relaxed into a smile.

"You bet I will. I can't see the use of havin' deer runnin' all over and never a shot fired; there's

a difference between supplyin' your wants and wastin'."

When the meal was concluded the Major shouldered his rifle and sauntered off toward the cabin of the settler. He returned in the course of an hour, with the announcement that the men would "not mind" taking a little meat; they had been too busy for a few days past to do any hunting. They would not object to a few trout, as well, if we had them to spare. This was good news.

"Those men have trapped and killed four bears during the past few days," said the Major.

"Where'bouts?" inquired Joshua quickly.

"Just up there in the timber a couple of miles. The bear killed a horse, and the men have been after the bear with pretty good success."

"I should say so—mebbe I'll go up and see 'em."

"Better not, without a gun."

"That's so—mebbe there's more around," murmured Joshua; "I've no notion goin' up there and roostin' in a tree." In a few moments he broke out with a song which we had not heard from him:

"The Lord will provide."

"I've heard that He 'helps those who help themselves,'" said the Major.

"Look here, major, haven't I been tryin' to help myself for a week and can't?"

There was something irresistibly ludicrous in the pathetic appeal that set us all laughing, including the promoter of the merriment.

"I will try for one in the morning, Mr. Miles, or you may go if you can get back in time to prepare breakfast."

"Oh, I'll get back in time, you bet."

As it was after nine o'clock, the Major said he would go up the cañon a little way and catch a few trout. I was to look after the advancement of Mr. Dide; I prevailed upon him to leave his umbrella in camp, and took him and his new rod under my supervision. The gentleman gave indications of improvement, and I persuaded him to the pool with the drift. After several ineffectual efforts he succeeded in throwing his fly beyond the brush in mid-stream, and hooked a trout that the next moment had the line entangled. He was without waders, and I did not propose to swim in that cold water for the sake of saving another man's leader. I took the rod, but finding gentle manipulation unavailing, I gave the line a pull and broke the snell only. Bending on another fly, I advised him to work his way through the bushes and reach the little bar where I had landed my last trout. By that means he could cast up toward the pool and would avoid at least one pile of brush. When he was fairly stationed I went back to camp, took my bamboo and worked my way down to the water at the mouth of the cañon.

A likely place presented itself a few rods above; I crossed a riffle and made my way to it on a beach of gravel about three feet wide. The pool was quite deep on the farther side and the bottom de-

scended somewhat abruptly from the bar, so that I could not get more than eight feet from the bushes behind me without going over my boots. It was a difficult place to cast from, with even twenty feet of line, without catching the bushes, but I managed to get the fly away, after a fashion not satisfactory. It seemed the rule, however, that no matter where or how the fly landed, except on the shallow riffles, a trout was almost certain to put in an appearance. In the clear and smooth-flowing water in front of me, I saw a dozen beautiful fish; the one nearest the fly came up and took it. I soon landed him on the beach and tried again. We had made some stir, but it had no appreciable effect on the others, and I had another fastened in a few moments. This sort of angling has its disadvantages to the lover of the gentle art; it is too apt to curtail the measure of his enjoyment; he absorbs in half an hour a fund that, to be correctly appreciated, should consume double the time.

Instead of casting again at once, I stood watching the well-to-do citizens. One and another would rise to the surface, take in something I could not discern and settle back again; their existence seemed to be one of ease, as of mortals who had inherited or secured a competency, and were disposed to indolence. They moved with a dignity characteristic of high breeding. If one started in quest of a floating morsel his nearest neighbor courteously bowed him on, as it were,

and with a graceful wave of his caudal said plainly: "Oblige me by taking precedence." Seeing one larger than his mates behind a small rock, I sent the coachman in his vicinity. Two started, but the smaller one halted—it was age and beauty before beauty alone. Age with its wisdom declined and settled back, beauty and inexperience came forward again and was lost to his crystal world.

Was this experience of the one who refused greater than could be encompassed by human subtlety? I was a little piqued, perhaps, at the indifference manifested. He might be a hotel clerk, a justice of the peace or some other dignitary metamorphosed.

I lighted my pipe, sat under the shade of the mountain beeches, smoked and reflected. An ousel came suddenly round the elbow of the river and alighted in the edge of the water a few yards away. He bobbed up and down a few times, said something to himself and took a running dive for a few feet along the margin of the bar, came out again, bobbed and spoke, as though he might be rehearsing for some water-wagtail entertainment, then took another dive. Presently a second one came round the same course, pleased himself and me with an exhibition precisely like that of his predecessor and finally disappeared.

I changed the coachman for a gray hackle with a peacock body and stepped into the edge of the pool. "The deformed transformed" had resumed his station behind his desk, and I put the tempta-

tion in his way. He could not resist it; he had his price and I had ascertained its maximum; a very trifle indeed, the veriest fraud as usual, compounded of tinsel and feathers, appealing first to the eye, then to the palate, arousing his dormant wicked propensities, tickling not the least of these —his avarice. I felt, I must confess, a symptom of contempt for him, as the sting of death touched his lips. I watched him struggle, feeling something approaching vicious exultation. I could not, however, but admire his efforts to rid himself of the consequences of his folly. Repentance, if he experienced it, came too late; the inexorable hand of the fate he had courted was closing upon him. He must have said to himself, at intervals, while he lay gasping: "If I were only safe out of this—I would never put on airs again—to excite the pride of the most humble of creatures." Resignation, however, was not one of his attributes; so long as hope of escape held a place in the remotest corner of his soul, he debated between genuine repentance and its shadow. He would yet make endeavors to release himself; if successful his old ways would be avoided, and humility might find a place in his mind, perhaps. I was not thoroughly convinced that he had been sufficiently overcome to warrant this favorable conclusion; I was still anxious to put my hand on him; he might forget his lesson. Being myself unsettled, I experienced no trouble in attributing all the hallucination to the individual at the other

end of the line. One last, glorious endeavor, and he was free. I lifted my hat in token of his prowess, though I had not entirely pardoned his original conceit. When I saw him again he had safely ensconced himself between two rocks with his nose courting the opposite bank. He seemed very passive, with his tail at right angles with the gentle current. I watched him some time, but he did not move; he was prostrated, if ever fish was, in abject humiliation, crushed, absolutely, to earth.

I resolved to say nothing of my adventure. The Major would receive my story with an aggravating smile, a smile that quietly throws out temptation to anger and violence. Or Joshua might break out with that song of his:

"Tell me the old, old story."

But I will intrust it to you, in confidence, you understand. I am a very good judge and he weighed four pounds, if he weighed an ounce.

I recrossed the riffle and sought Mr. Dide. I found him within a few feet of where I had deposited him. He had procured his umbrella during my absence, and, with the patience commendable in the bait fisherman, was waiting for a rise in six inches of water. I watched him for a while and wondered if he would make even a fisherman; he possessed some of the gifts of the angler.

"I see you have that umbrella again, Mr. Dide."

"Aw, yes—it is so vewy waam, you know, in the sun."

"Have you caught anything?"

"Not yet, but I anticipate a vewy big one, by-and-by."

I went up to the pool with the drift, and casting my hackle close under the old log, was fast in a moment to the mate of the one I had secured before breakfast. Pursuing my former tactics I was soon by the side of our friend, who watched me with interest and encouraged me with his doubts of my ability to land the captive. When I finally brought him out, released him from the hook and rapped him on the head with a stone, Mr. Dide declared he never could accomplish such a feat.

"Why, my deah boy, he would smash my pole, you know."

His modesty gave me some hope that ultimately he would arrive at proficiency, barring the umbrella.

At noon the Major put in his appearance with twelve trout and two white-fish; the string weighed sixteen pounds.

"That is a splendid average," said the Major, spreading the fish out upon the grass, to be the more conveniently admired as individuals.

These white-fish were the first we had taken, although they are quite plentiful in the stream, and are sometimes an annoyance to those who are seeking trout only. Why they should be a source of vexation to any one is a mystery. The fish is beautiful in contour, more slender than the trout,

has a delicate mouth, rises eagerly to the fly, and its meat is delicious. Break a Brazil nut in two, and the firm white kernel will remind you of the meat of the white-fish when it has been properly cooked. They are good fighters withal, though they do not break the water when hooked as readily as the trout. To my mind the complaints have in them somewhat of affectation, unless one is indulging solely in the science of angling.

The following morning the camp was not astir until the sun came up over the hills and, shining in our faces, dried the moisture on our beards. The Major was the first to awake, and looking in Joshua's direction, discovered that individual in the enjoyment of his morning nap. He called to him:

"I thought you were going for a deer, Mr. Miles. You should have been up before daylight."

Joshua declared that such had been his intention, but on reflection he thought, that as he would have to wade the stream, he would not go.

"But there must be good hunting on this side, Mr. Miles."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder, but it looks better over on that side; mebbe I'll go when the grass dries off."

"If you had only mentioned your preference I would have gone out and driven a deer into camp."

"Now, look here, Major, can't you give us a rest? I was sleepy this morning, that's a fact."

Before day the next morning, the Major slipped

out of his blankets, and with his Winchester started off in the direction of the aspens on the hills below and back from the camp. The sun had fairly streaked the east with gold color, and I lay watching the coming light, dozing a few moments and then awakening to see the surroundings put on more definite shapes, when I heard the report of a rifle. Before the echo ceased its complainings I was asleep again, dreaming that the major had encountered a silver-tip, and, failing in his first shot, had been compelled to take to a tree. I saw the brute tearing away at the bark and my friend embracing the trunk a dozen feet from the ground. The comical side of the picture was appealing to me when the vision suddenly vanished. I had been aroused by my own laughter, and I saw the Major looking down at me with a broad smile on his face.

"You must have been indulging in a pleasant dream, my boy. Come, it is time you were out of bed. Mr. Miles, will you please put the saddle and bridle of Mr. Dide's on one of your mares and go with me? I have killed that deer."

The Major was wet to the waist. Joshua looked at him dolefully and crawled out, inquiring for the locality of the game. When the Major told him it was not half a mile away and he had seen fresh bear tracks, he accelerated his pace and longed for another rifle.

We had noticed every morning fresh deer signs along the margin of the river, and the Major had

stationed himself in some willows but a little way from the camp. Just after daybreak the buck, which he brought in was on his way for a morning tipple when the Major called him to a halt. The animal turned in his tracks on feeling the bullet, and the Major had followed for nearly half a mile, when he found him dead.

Joshua reported elk signs upon his return, and was enjoying a new fever from that cause; but he never found any cartridges in the magazine when the weapon was left in camp.

We had passed two weeks in our delightful retreat, seeing no one except the inhabitants of the neighboring ranch, who would visit us at intervals for a supply of trout, which we always had for them. In return they brought us such quantities of rich milk that we became surfeited. The weather had been superb, without a drop of rain, and we had no use even for the fly to shelter us at night. The Major wished for a shower to break the monotony, but we did not get it.

We had wondered more than once during our idle moments concerning the deacon and his whereabouts. One evening when Mr. Dide and myself were alone at the camp-fire, the Major and Joshua having gone to the neighboring ranch, I made bold to inquire of the gentleman touching the ladies in whose company we had left our friend. Mr. Dide answered:

"Miss Jennie is a cousin, I believe, of the Deacon, as you call him."

"But about the other lady, Mr. Dide?"

"Aw,—Miss Gwace!—she is a vewy chawming young lady, as you say."

"You have known her some time?"

"Aw—y-a-s."

Mr. Dide retired within himself, and I concluded, if I would learn anything, I must come to the point without indirection.

"She seems to be alone here; how does that happen?"

"Most extwaawdinawy—she is a vewy independent young lady and went away fwom home because of some misapwehension with her welatives. They pwoposed that she mahwy a gentleman who was distasteful to her and she declined."

"I admire her for declining such an alliance."

"So do I, you know—by Jove—I do! My impwession is that if the gentleman had known he was distasteful, he would have withdwawn himself—I know he would."

"You know the gentleman, then?"

"Aw, y-a-s. But it was too bad, you know, that she should be compelled to abandon her home. I have twied to pwevail on her to weconsidah and weturn, but she won't, you know. I have it fwom a weliable fwiend that she wan out of money heah last wintah, and became a waitah, watha than communicate with her welatives. She is a bwave young lady; I wegwet she deemed it necessawy to do so."

"What was her objection to the gentleman, Mr. Dide?"

"She said to her fathah that he was a simpleton, —the gentleman, I mean. She was wight, no doubt, but she is a vewy extwaawdinawy young lady, you know; she's a student of Dawwin and Huxley and those fellows, and the gentleman—aw—he is—aw —only a gentleman, you know, with no taste in that direction."

"Indeed, Mr. Dide, I believe you—he is a gentleman."

"Thanks. I—I know him and he would not have sanctioned it—weally—he would have ceased his attentions at once. It is a vewy unhappy situation—he was not advised until she had put her wesolution into effect. She is a vewy amiable young lady, but she has too much pwide to seek a wecconciliation with her pawents. I endeavahed to pwesent the mattah to her in the stwongest light, but she would not be moved."

"She seemed to be very favorably impressed with the Deacon, Mr. Dide," I ventured to insinuate.

"Aw, y-a-s, you are wight; the Deacon is, I think, a vewy estimable gentleman."

"But suppose he should not be serious, Mr. Dide—the Deacon is a stranger to you, and he might be trifling."

"Twifling! impossible! I cannot think so of him."

"Ah! Deacon! Deacon!" I thought, "you called this gentleman, contemptuously, 'a dude'—how do you compare with him?" and confessed to myself that the verdict was not in favor of my

friend. I had no question of the Deacon's integrity. I was looking only for one of the elements that go to make up a gentleman, and found that Mr. Dide was better endowed with unselfishness.

The Major and Joshua coming in, the subject between Mr. Dide and myself was dropped. That night when my friend and I were covered with our blankets, looking out at the bright lamps and ready to be wooed into unconsciousness by the river's melody, he said to me:

"I have changed my mind concerning our new friend. I thought he would be a bore, at least, but I have discovered him to be a gentleman."

"So have I." But I did not deem it necessary to explain to him why I had reached the same conclusion.

CHAPTER IX.

SUCCESS AND—SUCCESS.

BREAKING camp, we went down the river as far as Still Water. I left our old quarters with a feeling of regret, thinking that when I came again I should find them occupied; it was like giving up to strangers a home where life has been sweet. No one may question the stranger's right nor his good taste, but it is not a pleasant reflection that in due course one will be crowded out or will drop from his place, and the world will move round at the same old rate, as if one had never encumbered the earth; the thought tends to induce humility.

"It's like stickin' your finger in a pail of water, then pullin' it out and lookin' for the hole," said Joshua, as I expressed my regrets.

"I have heard that comparison before, Mr. Miles."

"So have I, Major. Mebbe I'll strike somethin' yet that you *ain't* heard."

The retort called a smile to the Major's face as he turned away.

The camp for a day on the Still Water gave the Major an opportunity to shoot a few ducks, and the variety of our larder was thus added to. I

found my way through the willows and reached a clear place on the bank. The pool thus exposed to me presented an abundance of fish, the water being perfectly clear and glassy on the surface. I cast into it and the inhabitants started in every direction away from the lure. It was a good place to practice delicacy, and I soon concluded that delicacy was not among my talents. Now and then I would deliver the fly in a way that caused no commotion; the trout would not look at it, and as I drew it across the water, they would come up gently and take something within a few feet of it, then settle back, leaving a little ripple on the surface to widen. I changed flies several times, but the result was still the same: neither variety nor size seemed of any avail, yet the trout were feeding. I put a shot on the leader, threw above, and drawing the fly down, allowed it to sink and moved it slowly among them. One fellow came forward a little and looked at it, and I became satisfied that I saw him turn up his nose in disgust. That a human being of ordinary intelligence, as he presumed me to be, should put such an abominable species of diet as a bedraggled coachman on his dining-table, was beyond laughing at or praying for,—words were too feeble to express his scorn—he could only turn up his nose and move away. The verdict was as clear to me as the water.

A grasshopper might decoy one of those fellows to destruction, but there could be no credit in that

to me, as an angler. It would be assuming the rôle of a Borgia and not taking an adversary with all his faculties alert—it would be secret poisoning and not the clean rapier glittering in the sunlight backed by a heart willing to take equal chances. I scorned the grasshopper in this emergency, as the beautiful denizen of the crystal scorned my ragged servitor.

Close to the bank I saw a white-fish moving slowly up stream, nosing the small rocks as if he might be in search of a tid-bit to tickle a fastidious palate. His small scales were distinct, and with the sun's rays playing upon them he was the perfection of beauty in color. His dainty mouth was fairly visible, turned up to me, and his gill-covers glistened like polished silver. I took the shot from the leader and dropped the fly upon the surface about a yard in front of him, barely moving it. The water was about four feet deep and he was near the bottom. When he caught sight of the fraud, it seemed to me that I saw his eyes suddenly distend; the iris became animated and shone within a flexible circle of pale gold, as he sculled quickly to the surface and closed upon the hook. At the critical moment I gave the fatal motion of the wrist and the trim quarry was fast. The instant he felt the sting he darted, like a flash of light through a clear topaz, for the bottom and centre of the pool. His flight was a strong, steady pull, always below the surface. I would draw him up, but the moment his nostrils tasted

the air, he would strive for the depths. Believing him too heavy to lift out, and the bank being too high and abrupt for me to get down to him, I permitted him to fight until he was too feeble to prevent my holding his head clear from the water. In this condition, and when I deemed a violent struggle among the possibilities merely, I drew him toward the bank, kneeled, and taking the leader in my left hand as low as I could reach, I swung him upon the grass; he came straight, without the slightest movement until he touched the ground, otherwise he would have been free. I could not but notice how firm his body felt, as I grasped him to take out the hook; there was no yielding whatever to the pressure of my hand; he might have been absolutely as solid as a stone. Then I thought of those who take it upon themselves to talk flippantly of these pieces of perfection in their way, and felt a sympathy for the grumblers in their weakness.

I placed the fish in the shade of the willows and lengthened the line again; I felt encouraged by my success and thought I might secure a trout. They had returned to their several stations, after a short respite from the recent commotion, but all that I could see, scattered as I threw them the fly, save one; he seemed indifferent and remained at his post. I cast in his vicinity several times; he finally seemed inclined to move, and I coaxed him, as I thought, though perhaps I may have incited him to anger and a determination to drive

my monstrosity away. Whether rage, sudden hunger or curiosity impelled him was a matter of indifference to me; suffice it to say that he abruptly darted up and took the hitherto scouted mystery, and I fastened it directly through his tongue. My movement and his own impetus brought him clear of the water; he went back with a plunge, was up again in a few moments, shaking himself in a very paroxysm of rage and terror. Half a dozen times he rushed hither and yon, but at all times he felt the spring of the splendid toy in my hand. If he moved to the opposite shore, it checked his career and responded to his every motion, as he circled back. A straight shoot directly up stream, or down, the bamboo arched over him like the wand of fate. He would pause at times as if by contemplation he might solve the occult cause of his restraint, and thus devise an avenue of escape, but his destiny was determined. A few more struggles and he surrendered. He could not release himself; I could not free him, or I verily believe I should have bowed deferentially and requested him to retain his sword.

Even when he was so far exhausted that I could draw him toward me without resistance, I dared not attempt to lift him out as I had his predecessor. I called the Major and he came to me, held on by the willows, and slipping down the bank seized and threw the gallant champion upon the sod. It seemed like indignity to him to have him thus handled, and I told the Major so. He should

have been lifted out with the net and received with a delicacy commensurate with his greatness.

The white-fish weighed one pound and a half, the trout one pound and a quarter. Caught within fifteen minutes of each other, it was a fit time to determine their qualities as warriors. The trout, of course, from the dash and brilliancy of his evolutions, must bear the palm, but the sturdy determination of his neighbor in the pool must have a share of praise. I love them both, with a little more admiration in my heart for the black-spotted denizen.

The time to fish this water when a full creel is desired quickly is when there is a slight breeze, just sufficient force in the summer air to caress the surface into a gentle ripple. I warrant me, then there will be leaping and sport that will be fast and glorious. I had read of a trick, and tried it. I found a cottonwood leaf for my purpose, and wetting it, that the fly might stick to it gently, threw it into the pool. After several trials I succeeded in getting the fly partly upon it with sufficient hold at least to guide the leaf, which I worked down to where the trout seemed more numerous. I gave the fly a gentle flirt and it fell from the novel argosy into the water; it had not floated a foot before it was seized, and I had another fight on my hands, much to the interest and amusement of the Major.

At noon Mr. Dide expressed a preference for our late camp over the present one.

"I cannot heah the wipple of the watah, you know," was his explanation.

"Then, Mr. Dide, we will move on, and make camp below the Still Water, for a few days," said the major, expressing my wishes as well. "I have a weakness for that music, myself," he continued; "as cowering upon the lofty cliff, I trembling court the wondrous depths; with eager eyes I seek the angry rush and the flashing tints of foaming waves. Borne high upon the ambient air, the solemn whispers of troubled souls and the rippling laughter of the blest reach past me, intertwined, to sink again in lamentation. Then, lying prone, my attentive ears drink in the softer sighs of the sweeping crystal, and stills all my pulse to catch the cadence of the liquid rhythm, sweet as the fading notes of some dear vesper hymn, lingering in hushed cathedral aisles."

"Bwavo! bwavo! my deah Majah! you have won my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Dide, clapping his hands, and ecstatic enthusiasm apparently exuding from his entire person. My amazement kept me silent. That the Major should indulge in "that sort of sky-scraping," as Joshua irreverently expressed it, rather weakened my friend in our *chef's* estimation for the time. The Major received Joshua's strictures in dignified silence, which made the latter think there was more in the Major's poetic escapade than mere words, and, like every other mystery to the average intellect, it became weighty; he requested the Major to write

it down, and that is how it found a place here; I purloined the manuscript.

We moved down after the noonday meal and made camp in a secluded spot not a great way from the forks of the river.

That evening, when our fire burned low, Joshua felt in the mood to sing. Having concluded one hymn he struck into another familiar to Mr. Dide. The effusion had a refrain of some sort, and we were all startled by hearing that taken up and repeated by female voices. Not being superstitious, the Major moved out of the light of our own fire and discovered the reflection of another some little distance away. We had, in the vicinity, mortals like ourselves, but fairer, no doubt, and Joshua, with Mr. Dide's help, sent out frequent invitations to the unknown singers, bringing a response until the hour grew late. The episode was not an unpleasant one, and I thought it might pave the way to an acquaintance with our neighbors. In the morning I started on a prospecting tour, and the first individual I met proved, much to my surprise, to be the Deacon, whom I discovered gathering wood with which to cook breakfast.

Where did he come from?

"Why, Trapper's Lake—we came down the river yesterday, with the intention of spending a week on the South Fork, hoping to find you and the Major. I had no notion you two were the singers, or I should have called last night."

"Then you have the ladies with you?"

"Oh, yes, my cousin and her mother,—you saw my cousin at Cascade,—they were the singers you heard answering you."

"The Major and I were not the singers, Deacon."

"No? well, who is camped over there by you?"

"Our cook and Mr. Dide were the singers you heard."

"Mr. Dide—oh, he's with you, is he?" and there came a smile into the Deacon's face, as he repeated the name, that, with his tone, indicated nothing to be apprehended by the speaker from the vicinity or presence of Mr. Dide, and in addition, his air was patronizing. Had I not known the Deacon well, having much faith in his kindness of heart, his manner in speaking of my newer friend would have proved offensive.

"If you are so fortified in your own mind, Deacon, you can afford to speak less cavalierly of Mr. Dide."

"Fortified?" he repeated, "how fortified? Don't talk in riddles, old boy."

"You understand, well enough—victory should make you courteous to the conquered."

"Why, my dear sir, I never treated him uncivilly."

"Perhaps not, but you spoke uncivilly of him—you called him a dude, and your manner, just now——"

"Well, is he not a dude?"

"He is every inch a gentleman, Deacon."

"I may not dispute that; but you seem to take great interest in him."

"Not without reason, Deacon. What became of Miss Grace?"

"Miss Grace—why, she's in camp there, with my aunt and cousin." The Deacon's face was wreathed in a smile unmistakable in its import.

"I'm not disposed to be impertinent, Deacon—but are you engaged to Miss Grace?"

"Engaged! why, my dear sir, we were married ten days ago, at Glenwood."

"The d—deuce you were——"

"Fact, my dear old boy—and she's the sweetest——"

"Spare us, Deacon! you seem to have been expeditious."

"Not so,—I have known her for a year, nearly; we were engaged last winter. Cousin Jennie and she were schoolmates east."

"Oh, that's the way of it. Do you know that Mr. Dide will be glad to congratulate you?"

"No, I *don't* know it—to tell you frankly, he was the cause of her leaving home; perhaps I ought to feel friendly toward him because of that—indirectly he became my benefactor——"

"Wait a moment, Deacon, let me tell you something," and I detailed the conversation I had held with Mr. Dide over the camp-fire. "Now, you see, if he had been aware of her wishes she would have had no excuse for leaving; she did not refuse him directly, and her bear of a father had set his

mind in one direction and thought, no doubt, he was taking in the horizon, when he was only in a small hole of his own digging. Mr. Dide explained this to your wife, at Cascade, where they accidentally met, and she has failed to tell it to you. You know now how unselfish he was and is. Could you have relinquished your object with the same degree of nobleness?"

"Not one in a thousand would. But I don't just like the idea of some other man loving my wife better than I do."

"So long as she does not love him in return, you can have no cause of complaint."

"I guess you're right. I'll take in this wood and call on Mr. Dide."

Our friend received the announcement from me very quietly and greeted the Deacon cordially on his arrival. When the latter went away, Mr. Dide sauntered off to the river bearing his rod and umbrella. We saw nothing of him at noon, and later on I concluded to hunt him up. I had not gone far when I discovered him seated on the edge of a pool. He had one trout, thoroughly dried, and was waiting for another rise; the fly had floated down and lodged against a bit of willow that hung to the bank by its roots, while the limbs vibrated with the current. He started when I spoke to him, but looked up cheerfully, saying:

"I am afwaid I shall not make a success at fishing."

"Not if you sit still, Mr. Dide; you should keep

moving and the fly must not be allowed to rest a moment."

"Aw—that makes one's ahms ache, you know."

It might have made his heart ache less, perhaps.

"Supper is about ready—won't you come in to camp?"

"Weally, I did not think it was so late—thanks."

In the evening Mr. Dide announced that he should go to Meeker on the following day, and thence he knew not where, definitely.

"You'll go to Glenwood, won't you? I'd like to have you take word to my folks and tell 'em how we're gettin' on," Joshua requested, on Mr. Dide's stating his determination to return to civilization. The gentleman consented in his usual affable way. At the earliest opportunity, I informed Mr. Dide who Joshua's "folks" were.

"Weally! that vewy extwaadinawy old lady! I shall be obliged to wequest him to wite—then I can dwop it in the mail, you know."

And so on the morrow Mr. Dide drifted out of sight.

CHAPTER X.

VAPOR.

At the next evening's camp-fire I took down the Deacon's report of his trip:

"The trail from Glenwood Springs to Trapper's Lake is good, and the country through which it runs is always attractive, beautiful, and in places grand. In fact, it is a difficult matter, you know, to go astray of magnificent scenery in these beloved mountains of ours. We made one camp, the ladies being out for pleasure and not in a hurry, and for one day's ride the trip is a little tiresome, especially if you are not accustomed to the saddle. Our camp outfit and provisions made light loads for two pack animals.

"The first view of the lake coming in from the south side is finer than that from the trail out of Egeria Park. By the latter route you come directly upon the lake from the timber, low down the mountain side, and look directly across. By the way we came you get a fine view of the lake first from a point higher up the mountain, and can look down upon it, along its length, toward the outlet. You have a foreground of the beautiful lake, and through the wide gap at its foot a

distant range of hills veiled in the gray mist forms a background, while the lake itself, except at the outlet, is shut in by the high-terraced mountains. These mountains, you will remember, reach down to the very margin of the lake, excepting only at the little meadow on the left of the outlet. The terraces are thickly covered with pines until the last precipice is reached, which runs up above the timber line.

"We remained four days there, fishing from rafts. There are two varieties of trout in the lake, the light and the salmon-colored. The light variety are the fighters, of course, and so abundant that but for the presence of others to help us dispose of them they would spoil on our hands; they are large, too, running uniformly to fourteen inches in length.

"I killed a buck in the little meadow near the outlet. The Deaconess declares that those four days were 'just too lovely.'"

"But about the trail, Deacon, from the lake to the forks here?"

"It is a good trail. Did you ever see an Indian trail that wasn't good? Our red brother, as you call him, is a first-class engineer in that respect; he is the only one who accomplishes his purpose prompted by pure laziness. We took the ridge part of the way, and made a short *détour* to see the Devil's Causeway, and on that account saw a band of elk; there were fifty in the band at least, because I counted that number, and missed some

without doubt. There was indeed a commotion in the camp when I announced the discovery of bear signs, but I succeeded in allaying the fright by persuading them to believe that Cuffy was no more liable to attack us than the deer were. We had splendid fishing in the Pot Hole Valley, and I want you to know that I landed a trout of five pounds and four ounces out of one of those pools, and that's no fish story. The trout run large as they do here in the South Fork. White-fish are plentiful, too; the largest one I caught weighed a scant two pounds, and I know you agree with me as to their excellence on the table. The valley is filling up, though, with settlers; it is not so much in the wilderness as it was a few years ago."

"You are having an unusual wedding tour, Deacon."

"But a very happy one. Just try it, and see for yourself."

"I have been travelling the 'long path' too many years for that, Deacon."

"Well, you'll enjoy it, all the same."

Of course I had to thank the Deacon for the compliment and I promised to "try it."

The next day a few fleecy clouds climbed up over the hills in the west, and in the afternoon we moved further down the river toward Meeker. That evening we put up the fly for the first time, lapped and pegged down the ends. We thought we might have rain before morning, but were disappointed.

The following morning the clouds put in an appearance again; the sky had been absolutely clear during the most of our trip, and the pretty harbingers afforded a relief. From white they gathered into clusters and turned to gray, and the drapery of a darker shade, hanging below, told of the rain. It passed us by, however, and we had a beautiful sunset. The west was clear, while just above a range of hills in the east, veiled with a thin blue mist, was a stratum of pale bronze, its upper line apparently as straight as if run by a level. From this base of miles in length there arose a great mass of clouds, seemingly thousands of feet in height, and white as carded wool. Its northern and southern ends were almost perpendicular, and its summit of great rolling folds was outlined against the delicate blue of the sky. For half an hour there seemed no change; the huge pile stood apparently still, pure and white as newly-fallen snow. Then, as if moved by some gentle and artistic freak of its presiding genius, a rift in a mountain side appeared, reaching from the bronze base to the top, the line was sharply defined in white and gray and the shadow was cast against the background of white to our right. Away at the northerly summit a small bit seemed to break away, or was left; it divided, and in a few moments there were clearly defined a pair of gigantic wings, regular in their contour as those of a bird. In another place a gray tower presented itself with a great arched doorway near its base.

Castles would spring into a brief existence, machicolated and loop-holed, to be lost again in some modern cottage with vine-clad porch. Along the upper margin figures would come and go as if the gods and their retinues were all abroad directing a magnificent display. And in one corner, by itself, there was plainly outlined a fleecy hood, into which I caught myself intently gazing, expecting to see the laughing eyes and face of a beautiful child. All this in tones of white and gray. But as the sun sank lower, veils of slanting mist appeared here and there, the apparently solid mass was being broken up, the summit was still white scroll-work, but below, the line of bronze had turned into a crimson shade, within an uneven apex; the lead-colored base of the main body was changing to a purple hue, and all through the mass the rose and amber were being laid in, shifting from moment to moment, until the hues became bewildering in their multitude; then, as the sun went down, the gray tones returned again, such as the artist may sometimes give a hint of but never paints.

It was a great storm we had witnessed, away over the range to the east; we were far from the sound of the artillery, and it hid from us the flash of its batteries.

During the beautiful display the Deacon's young wife sat a few feet in front of me and to the left. She had moved but once, and that was when the first shadow came and marked out the great gorge; she turned round then, and said to me:

"Is it n

When the rose tints faded out, she turned again; there was a mist in her dark eyes, and a perceptible quiver about her pretty lips; she spoke in a half-whisper, as of one just awakened from a happy vision:

"Did you ever see anything so glorious? and yet I felt all the time as if I must kneel and look upon it with reverence."

I did not blame Mr. Dide, nor the Deacon; they couldn't help it; I envied her father.

"When we can have our backs to the afternoon sun, with a mountain range to the east of us, these magnificent carnivals of shadows are not uncommon."

"Did you see the baby's bonnet? was it not too cute for anything?" and then, half-musingly to me, "you have lived in these beautiful mountains since before the time I was born—you ought to be happy!"

I told her that happiness was my normal condition, and then she wanted to know of me if I had ever read Ruskin, and I said I hadn't.

"I wish he could have seen what we have this afternoon."

"He would have criticised and found fault with it."

"It is unkind of you to say so, knowing nothing of him."

The rebuke was quick, earnest, and, I confessed to myself, not wholly unwarranted. I determined

to read Ruskin, and I presume that if the major and the others had not just then drifted up to us, I should have been led off after "Darwin and those fellows." With such disciples the philosophers in question might effect a revolution rapidly.

The Major and the others, except Joshua, had much to say about the afternoon's entertainment. Joshua didn't see anything except a great bank of clouds, and knew there had been a storm on the main range.

While we were at supper (and since we had ladies in company, the Major had improvised a table out of some boards which he picked up, using the wagon seats for supports), our table now decked with wild flowers, and the tin plates and cups presenting a brighter appearance, we had a call. Our visitor was a lank mortal in flannel shirt, blue cotton overalls, and the ordinary white felt hat of the country. He was not a cowboy, but "a hand" from a neighboring ranch, who had "hoofed it in last fall."

"Evenin'," was his salutation, with a nod, intended for all of us. "Bin campin' out, ain't ye? Had a good time, s'pose—lots o' fish and sech? Didn't see nothin' of a roan cayuse with a strip in face, up crick? No! been a-huntin' the darn brute since noon-time; branded 'J. K.' on his left hip."

"You'd better keep on, if you count on findin' him before night," hinted Joshua, shaking a flapjack in the frying-pan preparatory to a final turn.

"Stranger in these parts?" the visitor inquired of Joshua.

"Yes; been here a week."

"More'n that—I see you go up crick more'n two weeks ago. What's yer business?"

"Mindin' it."

"Mindin' what?"

"My business."

"Don't know as you'll ever die o' brain fever."

"Neither will you, if you stay in this country. I wonder you wasn't buried before spring."

"They wasn't no fellers round here handy 'nough——"

"What can we do for you, my friend?" broke in the Major, in some doubt as to the result of the dialogue.

"Nothin', 'bleeged to ye, 'less yer got sumpin's good for cuts; cut my finger sharpnin' a sickle; durn near cut it off an' it's festerin'—see." He exposed the wounded member. If there is anything in life with a tendency to raise one's curiosity, or anything else, I know of nothing more potent than a sick finger at meal time. The stranger was generously determined that none of us should miss the luxury. The Major stared, the ladies turned away, and Joshua, out of all patience, exclaimed:

"Come off the shelf, man, the flies'll eat you up."

The stranger's attention was distracted.

"Whatcher mean? I ain't got no flies on me, mister."

"Cover up that paw o' yours and go after your cayuse—don't you see it up yonder in the willers?" And Joshua took our visitor by the arm and started him in the right direction. He led him farther than was necessary, the pony being in sight, and they had some conversation on the way, but we did not overhear it, and they seemed to part with a satisfactory understanding.

The next day we made a move still farther down stream and camped in the vicinity of the site selected by the government for the erection of a saw-mill that was to aid in civilizing the Utes. The habitations that had been erected at great expense were no longer visible; literally not one stone remained upon another. The boiler was perforated with bullet-holes, and rusty bits of machinery lay scattered over a square mile of the level mesa. A more complete wreck than this, effected by the gentle savages, would be hard to conceive, and a more sorrowful exhibition of sheer viciousness could not have been expressed; it was as if the destroyers had determined to obliterate every vestige that might give rise even to a memory of the kindness intended them. Those beautiful symbols of peace, the doves, were plentiful, flitting about the ruins, as docile as if the valley had never known a wrathful moment. The birds were not within the protection of the law, but to kill them in such a place seemed like adding sacrilege to cruelty, so not one was harmed.

Upon the breaking up of this camp our company

was to be divided. The Deacon and his relatives would turn off to the right a few miles below, to visit the Thornburg battle-ground, while the Major and I would take our way back over the old route to Glenwood Springs. One more day's sojourn on the beautiful river at our first camping-ground, below Meeker, and we bade farewell, reluctantly, to the charming valley. But the keen edge of our unwillingness was softened by an assurance to ourselves that another summer would find us again with our tent pitched amid the sweet peacefulness. We would come again, if for no other purpose, to make acquaintance with the trail to Trapper's Lake—the gem of the Roan Range.

There is no comfort whatever in towels, with a tin cup for a bath-tub; the White River is no place to bathe in, unless one would encourage pneumonia or the rheumatism. The sight of the great pool at Glenwood, after several weeks of travesty, gave a hint of marvellous luxury. It was as if we approached the performance of a religious rite; we stood upon the edge, filled with the eagerness of neophytes, but hesitating for a moment before penetrating the mystery whose revelation we sought. But once within the warm embrace of the voluptuous crystal, the Wesleyan admonition was made manifest; we washed, and worshipped close to the throne. Then we thanked the men whose enterprise had converted the possibility of the luxury into a fact.

"Epicurean Rome could boast of no such treat

as this," exclaimed the Major, shaking the crystal drops from his shaggy mane, as he rose to the surface after the first plunge.

"I don't know much about Rome," said Joshua, "but this suits me, this does."

We left the bright little city beautifully nestled among the carmine hills, as the afternoon sun was caressing the summits of the mountains in the west. We were again on the rail, speeding up the valley of the Roaring Fork. A slight bend in the road and Mount Sopris towers grandly, in front and to the right of us, with its long patch of snow offering a perpetual challenge to our daily friend.

The ride up the great gorge in the western slope to the top of the Saguache Range affords a grander pageant than that in descending. One experiences a sensation of quiet, while one is looking down upon a panorama that is drifting. As the sun touches only the highest peaks the magnificent cliffs and wooded mountain sides are in shadow, seem animate, and as if stealing away, phantom-like, into the deepening twilight below. But the sunlight of the morrow will clothe the scene in new beauties, and the summer days to come will be bountiful in fresh surprises for the sojourner in these recesses of the majestic hills.

THE SWITCHBACK.

CHAPTER XI.

PIKE'S PEAK.

THE name has a familiar sound; I have heard it almost every day for nearly three decades, and wherever English is spoken the name has been mentioned. Having it in sight daily, with its long slope reaching up to the apex over fourteen thousand feet high, its north face always clothed in or fretted with snow, it might seem that it would grow monotonous. Monotony is not possible with the magnificent eminence and, like the presence of one we love, it is always welcome. The great ice-field at the pole is as to the earth but the thickness of a hair, the great mountain range as a wrinkle on the surface; but we measure the thickness and the heights by miles. They who made the Bible possible loved the high places of the earth; the law was there given to the great leader, and the beloved Master sought the mountain top to pray. It lifted him away from the earth while he was of it, but brought him nearer to the Father. It is the vantage ground of humility, the sanctuary where arrogance cannot enter.

The devil was lacking in tact when he offered the world to the Master from a mountain top; his

royal highness was out of his element, the atmosphere was repugnant. Neither he nor his pupils lack ambition, but on a mountain top there is nothing to which mortal may aspire, except the unknowable, and for the unknowable he is made willing to bide his time in meekness. It is no place for his majesty to proselyte; his most zealous disciples even, are liable to step into the path he never designed for them. No doubt the devil would have failed, on the occasion in question, had he selected a valley where the air was impure, but to seek a mountain top as the theatre for the briber of One purer than the element he breathed, only goes to show that the devil, with all his accredited intelligence, was a very great ass. The only mystery to me is that he himself was not then and there led captive and future generations saved from his machinations. The solution may be that, being already condemned, he was beyond the pale of divine influence. I would, however, give the devil his due, and should be glad to surmise that he longed to be clean, but was so much of a dolt as not to be worth regenerating.

The first man to climb a mountain peak may be pardoned exultation at the accomplishment of his feat. The gallant officer whose name this mountain bears essayed that exploit and failed, though history says he wrought valiantly. Grand monuments are not infrequently erected to the undeserving. We have other mountains with titles a little more satirical; there can be no ob-

jection to commemorating the memory of a dead hero, for a man is rarely a hero until he is dead, and this is no paradox. But except in a very few instances, it were well to leave the erection of memorials to the intimate friends of the dear departed, rather than to appropriate, without permission, the works of the Almighty. Mountains, however, are abundant, and we, not being the owners, can afford to give them away; it were better, though, to reward our live friends out of our own earnings. We know in such case they would have the chance at least to appreciate our acknowledgment of their merits.

He who goes up a mountain by trail may exult in a lesser degree than the first explorer. But all may not surmount unexplored mountains; many cannot do so even by trail. To him, then, who makes the happiness of conversion from the ills of this life possible to all, if only for an hour, great credit is due, and he may, with an easy conscience no doubt, exact toll for his achievement.

To the æsthetic it may seem like a sacrilege to disfigure a great mountain with a road; but a road for human needs is so slight a scratch here on the earth's surface that it does not mar the surroundings. The good that it does outweighs the apparent desecration. As the Major and myself aspire to that which is high, and as neither of us might reach the summit of the peak by the primitive methods any more than office may now be so reached, the opportunity to gratify our ambition

by carriage was a blessing. The novelty must be considered as adding to the zest.

The mountain is not visible from Cascade, the initial point of the road; the intervening hills shut it out. Starting thence we follow the Fountain up a very little distance, then turn to the left along the face of the first hill, then to the right, and so winding our way for two miles we reach the vicinity of the Grotto in Cascade Cañon. In a direct line we are half a mile from the starting-point. Over and through the pines that sparsely cover the mountain side, and over beds of wild flowers that carpet the slope, we can, before this distance is accomplished, obtain a fair view of the valley of the Fountain, Cascade and Manitou, thence out on to the broad plains, rising blue and dim until they kiss the horizon. One does not look for valleys in the mountain tops, but a mountain top reached is still further surmounted, and the road winds through aspen glades and the air is freighted with the odor of pines.

The four horses trundle the light Beach wagon along most of the way at a trot. The driver tells you that after a little while the horses must be brought down to a walk. The grade is not steep, but "in the light air a fast gait would be a little hard on the stock."

Eight and a half miles we have come in a little less than two hours. "A pretty good road," that allows the making of such time to an elevation of over three thousand feet, at a guess. We are half

way and are still in the timber. "The horses are changed to mules here"—an extraordinary metamorphosis, certainly—that is the way the driver put it, but there was no mystery in his language, except to a Boston lady, who was anxious to witness the process. Verily one must speak by the card in such a presence, or "equivocation will undo us." The four mules seemed to consider their load a trifle and they moved as jauntily as if out for a holiday.

To beguile the tediousness of the way we were assured that on returning we should "come in a whirl." The motive that prompted the information was commendable, and the driver to be excused—he travelled the road every day and his early pleasure had simply turned into an attractive matter of business. We told him not to hurry on our account, as it was our desire to miss no part of the scenery. He said he should come back in two hours and a half. I had ridden behind mules before—I mean in period of time—and was doubtful touching the prospective gloriousness of the journey, but he assured me that it was perfectly safe. He spoke of a "switch-back," and there was an intimation of occult peril in his manner. When we reached the vicinity of the timber line he pointed out the mystery. From our point of vision the zigzag scratches away up on the steep mountain side reminded me of old times. I was having a longitudinal view of a few sections of worm fence running up a hill at an

angle of seventy degrees; at least a man under the influence of spirits would say it was a longitudinal view. Considered as a fence, from an economical basis, the angles were unnecessarily acute; it might fairly have represented five miles of fence and half a mile of ground in a straight line, or it looked as if unknown powers at each end were trying to jam the thing together and make it double up on itself.

I was very much interested in it. As a line for an irrigating ditch it might be pronounced a success. As nothing goes down a ditch except water, and very little of that in a dry season, nobody is put in jeopardy.

"And you come down there at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour?" I asked.

"Yes, oh, yes, easy enough."

"I should think it would be easy, especially if you went off one of those corners."

"You wouldn't know the difference."

"No, I suppose not. It must be a glorious ride, coming down at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour, I think you said?"

"Yes, eight or nine, mebbe less, dependin'."

"You can make it in less time, then?"

"Certainly."

"And turn round those corners?"

"'Course, how else? You don't s'pose I'm thinkin' 'bout rollin' down the mountain side?"

I wondered what else it would be without snow on the ground; but the driver seemed a little too

short of breath to answer. I accounted for his deficiency in this regard because of the altitude; we were above timber line, eleven thousand feet and over from sea-level. The pines had become dwarfed, naked on one side, and were leaning toward the rocks above them, or, in their sturdy struggle for existence, they clung to the precipitous mountain side like matted vines. Looking down from a certain point I observed a large quantity of the road resembling a corpulent angle-worm in several stages of colic. I could not resist appealing to the driver again; I don't think anybody could.

"Do you go round all those places at the rate of eight or nine miles an hour?"

"Of course."

"And you don't slow up?"

"What should I slow up for?"

"So as not to turn over, you know."

"I never turned over in my life, and I drove stage in California twenty years."

I believed he was a liar, but deemed it inexpedient to tell him so, although he was a small man.

"Never had a runaway either, I suppose?" and sitting behind him I casually—it being convenient—put my hand on his biceps; the arm was not large, but assuring.

"No."

My opinion of his veracity was not augmented.

"I hardly think you can make the time you say you can."

"Just wait and see."

"I'm sure it will be grand; I've been suffering for such an experience."

"I didn't know but you was gittin' a little nervous—they sometimes do."

"Nervous! I'm an old stager. I have ridden with Bill Updyke and Jake Hawks many a mile in these mountains. Take it in the winter time, down hill, for instance, the road covered with ice and the driver obliged to whip his horses into a dead run to keep the coach from sliding and swinging off such a place as that," and I pointed to a precipice several hundred feet perpendicular at our left. "That's coaching!" and I placed my hand upon his shoulder affectionately. During the colloquy the Major had not opened his lips.

The vicinity is the dwelling-place of desolation; nothing but rocks about us. What had once perhaps been a solid mass of trachyte is split to fragments in the mill of the centuries, and bits from as big as one's fist to the size of one's body or a small house lay tumbled in a confused and monstrous heap, as though there might have been in the remote ages, a great temple here dedicated to the gods of old, and now in shapeless ruins.

Of the view from this great mountain peak, what shall I or any one say? Nothing! It does not admit of description; upon it, you can understand why the Indian never mounts so high. It is one of the places whence comes his inspiration of deity, the temple of his god, and he may not

desecrate it with his unhallowed feet; it gathers the storm, and the sun caresses it into a smile and crowns it with glory, as he views it reverently from the valley. But we, the civilized, penetrate the mystery of these heights and find, what? humility! and feel as though we should have worshipped from afar. We have risen to receive the divine inspiration, our brother has remained below to kiss submissively the nether threshold of the sanctuary. Which is nearest to the Father?

It is very still to-day; no sound greets you save the gentlest murmur of the summer wind brushing lightly across the uninviting rocks. The wide plains checkered with green and gold, stretching away out below you, give you no sign. The city you see there, bustling with the ambition of youthful vigor, is silent as death; you recognize it as a town-plat on paper, that is all, except that it adds to the sense of your own insignificance; it may make you wonder, perhaps, why you were ever a part of the life there; it may be a shadow that you look down upon, as you would recall an almost faded dream. You turn.

"And the mountain world stands present
And behold a wond'rous corps—
Well I knew them each, though never
Had we met in life before—
Knew them by that dream-world knowledge
All unknown to earthly lore."

Just below you a vast ocean bed of billowy hills, with its stately pines dwarfed to shrubs, its shores

looming up in the dim distance through their dainty veil of gray, and brooding over all that

> "Awful voice of stillness,
> Which the Seer discerned in Horeb;
> That which hallowed Beth El's ground."

It seems like sacrilege, but the interest in that town-plat down there, or in one like it, begins tugging at the skirts of one's adoration. The sun is going down and we also must go.

I had an interview with the driver, out behind the barn. (There is a signal station on the summit and the barn is a necessity.)

"You are sure you can go to Cascade from here in two hours and a half?" I inquired.

"Certain."

"Take something?" and I made a feint of reaching into the inside pocket of my coat for "something" I did not have.

"Can't! that's agin' the rules—I'm a man of family and I don't care to lose my job."

"So am I a man of family, and my friend, the Major there, he has a family—a wife and nine children, all young. You love your family?"

"What do you ask that for? 'Course I do."

"So does the Major love his—the eldest only ten years old. You noticed, perhaps, on coming up, when we were talking about making time, going down 'in a whirl;' I think you expressed it so? Yes, he said not a word, just sat and listened. He was thinking about the seventeen miles down hill,

round those short curves, in two hours and a half. The Major has a slight heart trouble, and any little excitement, like rolling down the mountain side, or getting upset, might be injurious to him. Being a man with a large family I desire to avoid his running any risk—you understand? His family is dependent on him and he has no life insurance. Now, the making of this trip in two hours and a half might be well enough for me, because I am used to it, you know; I haven't so much of a family, and I've ridden with Bill Updyke and Jake Hawks, and there is nothing I should like better than just such a ride as you proposed—I'd glory in it, but I'm a little uneasy about the Major. The doctor has already warned him against any undue excitement. Hold on a minute! there is another matter: he'd never hint that he is nervous, he is very averse to having it thought that he is troubled that way—see? And just as like as not, to show you that he is not nervous, he would tell you to 'Let 'em out!' Now —hold on a minute! if he should tell you so, don't you do it—you just go round those curves quietly, and trot along easy like, or walk. He's a very close friend of mine, you can understand. Take this," and I slipped a half-dollar into the driver's hand. Just then I heard the Major yelling to me with the voice of a strong man in enviable health to "hurry up."

The driver accepted the half-dollar and went round one end of the barn to the carriage, while I

took the other way. When we were seated he touched the off leader gently, the team started, and then he twirled the long lash of his whip with a graceful and fancy curve that rounded up with a report like that of a small pistol. The mules struck into a gallop and I concluded that my half-dollar was wasted, literally thrown away, to say nothing of my other appeal. The loss of the latter caused me the more chagrin—the money was a trifle. But think of that blessed stage-driver ignoring my eloquence! By the great horn spoon! as Joshua would have expressed it, if I had a gun and was not deterred by the thought of consequences, I'd leave the wretch as food for the eagles —he'd never be missed. Just about the time I had him fairly killed and his body comfortably rolled over a precipice where it would never be discovered, he came to the first turn. The mules were on a dead run, and what did that—blessed driver do? He just let that silk out again, gave a yell like a Comanche and whirled round that bend without so much as allowing the wheels to slide a quarter of an inch, and away he went, down the short, straight stretch as though he had been paid to go somewhere in a hurry. When he made the next turn I leaned over and said quietly: "Let me see that half-dollar I gave you; perhaps it is plugged."

He changed his lines and whip into his left hand and passed over the suspected coin with his right. I substituted a silver dollar, which he

slipped into his pocket, straightened out his lines and brought the mules down to a trot.

"Why don't you let 'em out, driver?" inquired the Major.

The driver looked round as if he thought I had addressed him.

"I think you can let 'em go," I said, and he did! Along the straight chutes! around the bends! away and down, with a merry jingle of the harness, the cool air turned into a breeze that caressed our cheeks as lovingly as the kiss of a child! Away and down, with the gleeful "hi! he! g'lang there" of the driver, the mountains began to tower above us! Away and down, with the sharp reports of the curling lash, the cold granite and dwarfed shrubs changed, and we sped in among the stately pines! Away and down, with hearts as light as the perfumed air, the flashes of the sun stealing through the trees salutes our flushed faces, and every moment a Te Deum Laudamus whispers in ecstasy from our half-closed lips. Eight miles and a half in thirty-five minutes! Was there ever before such a ride vouchsafed to mortal?

We sighed for four fresh mules to take us the remainder of the way. The exhilaration was not lost behind the horses, it was only toned down. As the evening shades began to touch the valley and while the sun yet kissed the mountains above us, we brought up at the starting-place, happy.

THE RIVALS OF BASSET BAR.

THE RIVALS OF BASSET BAR.

"I THOUGHT," said the Major after supper, "that when we were on the summit I could see Powell Mountain; but there is such a wilderness of peaks that one must be familiar with every point of view to be certain of any monarch."

"What is the connection, Major? Why should that mountain hold a special place in your esteem at this time?"

"I have an invitation to take breakfast with some friends, and you are included."

"In the invitation or among your friends?"

"Thinking of one of them reminds me of Black Lake and Eagle River—we have fished there." The Major has a gratifying way of ignoring me at times. "I did a little placer work once, not far from Powell Mountain, and left some money there. Did you ever hear of Basset Bar?"

"I never did."

"There is a bit of romance connected with the vicinity."

"I should like to hear it."

"You can read it—I'll give you the manuscript. I brought it for the Deacon to read, but forgot to give it to him."

CHAPTER I.

Early morning on Spruce Creek had its inspirations "away back in the sixties." The August sun rises always in a cloudless sky. Mount Powell with its great double peaks and snow fields has a setting in crimson, then in pale gold that quickly drifts into delicate blue as the sun reaches up over the summit and drives out the mists and gladdens the narrow valley.

Sandy McLaughlin's cabin, well up on the western slope, feels the early rays, and they weave threads of amber and gold in the fair hair of a young girl standing in the doorway. The hair is tumbled, and falls in heavy masses over her shoulders and clings about her white throat, which the faded pink gown generously exposes. Her ripe lips, slightly parted, disclose the tips of her even teeth; her chin is well rounded, with a hint of a dimple in the centre; her cheeks are browned and her eyes rival the color of the canopy; barefooted and displaying an arched instep "under which water might run" and a trim ankle which that same pink gown refuses to hide; one arm from which the loose sleeve has slipped back is raised, and the brown hand is shading the blue eyes as she watches a certain spot in the trail on the op-

posite mountain; and that same kindly old gown, gathered at the waist, gives a hint of a beautifully developed bust and well-rounded limbs. But she is in a wilderness of mountains and there are no prying eyes, except——

Suddenly the girl disappeared and closed the door; over on the trail a rift in the pines had exposed two men coming down, driving a burro, and one other, whom she did not see, stole away through the trees at the back of the cabin. The two men with the burro were at the door within five minutes, and one of them called "Dolly" while he sounded the battens with his knuckles. Dolly answered the summons with shoes and stockings on, another dress, a little shawl pinned across her shoulders, and that tumbled hair smoothed out and gathered in a great coil at the back of her head. The man who had knocked was broad-shouldered, deep-chested, dressed in coarse overalls and boots; his face was covered with a thick blonde beard and moustache and his blue eyes had a kindly look in them.

"How is my little girl?" was his first salutation, taking her face in his hands and kissing her. Without pausing for an answer, which in the circumstances would have been superfluous, he continued: "and where is Ted?"

"Not out of bed yet."

"The lazy loafer. Ted, you rascal! come out here!" There was a world of good-nature in the tones, despite the epithets and the command.

"This is my daughter, Dolly," he continued, unheeding a smothered response, presumably from Ted. "Mr. Mayo, Dolly, whom I overhauled last night beyond the cañon, just as he was making a late camp; he was on his way to Basset Bar to see his partner and I stopped for company."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Mayo," and Dolly shook the stranger's hand cordially, looking frankly into his dark eyes. "Take a seat, please, and make yourself at home while I get a cup of coffee ready. Why didn't you come in last night, father?"

"Because our friend here was tired, and, besides, the trail is bad."

"Didn't you suppose I would be uneasy?"

"Well, yes, I did—but you could survive the uneasiness, while a misstep on old Mule Shoe, I thought, might bring you to grief as well as Ted."

"And you were not uneasy about Ted and me?" looking over her shoulder with her hands in the biscuit.

"Why should I be?"

"The bar is but a little way off—and think of the men there!" and she glanced around again, laughing.

"Had a house full, I bet."

"Half a dozen or so for the last three days," and the little laugh came rippling out again.

"Ah, Dolly, I shall have to send you away."

"Don't think of it—how could I get along without you?"

"You mean how could I get along without you."

"Yes, that's what I said," laughingly.

"Was Beverly among your visitors?"

"Beverly!" and as her father uttered the name Mr. Mayo thought that a slight flush came into her cheek as she stood with her side toward him; but then it might have been because of the exertion in rolling out the dough. "Let me see," setting aside the bottle which served her as a rolling-pin, and considering, as if individualizing an admirer required an effort—"Yes, oh, yes, he was here last night—Ted and he played checkers until late." The biscuit were cut quickly, with the aid of a tumbler, and placed in the oven, but Dolly hurried on: "The next time you go to the bar *do* try and remember that rolling-pin." She took a ham from the cupboard. "You've been promising to bring it for ever so long, and this bottle isn't nice at all."

The ham was sliced, placed in the frying-pan and a small basket of eggs set conveniently at hand. The coffee-pot was next filled two-thirds with cold water, a plentiful supply of the ground berry was turned in, and this important item of the meal given a warm spot on the stove.

"Watch the coffee, father, while I get some cream, and cut open a can of peaches, please," and Dolly disappeared jug and spoon in hand. She was back again just as the coffee bubbled up and needed attention; she shipped it to a cooler place, poured in a few spoonfuls of cold water and then allowed it to take care of itself. The frying-pan

next claimed her attention, and the savory slices soon filled the cabin with an appetizing fragrance, while a bountiful supply of sliced potatoes in another vessel added to the music so delightful to a hungry man. The pine table, in the middle of the floor, had an oilcloth cover, but this was quickly concealed by a cloth as white as soft mountain water and soap could render linen; a brief clatter of white stoneware and the table was set, the ham dished up and the eggs turned in, the oven door was opened once, then again, and the feathery biscuit exhibited the delicate brown proclaiming perfection.

Mr. Mayo watched with interest the preparation of the meal and listened to the exchange of commonplaces between Dolly and her father, Dolly always in the lead. Fifteen minutes had elapsed since she had invited him to a seat, then she invited them to the table. Ted, a lad of fifteen, came in looking swollen about the eyes but cheerful. His father bantered him about the late hours he had kept and his indulgence in checkers to the neglect of his books, as they disposed themselves for the meal. Being seated, Mr. Mayo cast his eyes toward the biscuit, and the next instant felt as though he had been detected in a breach of good manners. Sandy McLaughlin clasped his hands, devoutly bowed his head and asked a blessing, which was half-concluded before the guest recovered and put himself in position to look up when the others raised their eyes.

"Do you take cream and sugar in your coffee, Mr. Mayo?" and Mr. Mayo thought that no lady in the land could have put the simple inquiry with more grace. The cream, too thick to run, was dipped out with a teaspoon, the sugar followed, and Dolly poured a little coffee into an extra cup, that no obtrusive grounds should float upon the surface of the golden nectar that she was about to present. As she gave it to him the rough pine floor might have been covered with velvet; the cotton curtains at the windows, satin; the stool upon which he sat, a cushioned chair of exquisite design and a marvel of comfort.

"Let me help you to a bit of the ham, Mr. Mayo," said Sandy, holding out a generous slice, "and the eggs—help yourself to the biscuit and eat hearty—that butter is of Dolly's churning and I brag of her butter."

"But you mustn't forget Daisy," interposed Dolly, "she is not very pretty to look at, but her milk is rich."

Mr. Mayo was quite fervent in his praise, not alone of the butter, but the biscuit; and as to the coffee! it was a revelation! Even his mother could not achieve such success. A shadow flitted over Dolly's face at the comparison, brief as the passage of a fleecy cloud across the sun on a summer's morning.

"Don't you have good coffee in Denver?" queried Dolly as if she knew what the answer would be; and she was not disappointed. But

Mr. Mayo was from California Gulch, not from Denver. He was engaged in placer-mining there, and had been for two months or thereabouts, with fair success. Then the prospects of that camp, together with those of Basset Bar, made up the substance of the conversation until the conclusion of the meal.

The guest stood at the threshold, his roll of blankets over his shoulder, indulging in a parting chat with his host, when Dolly came out wiping her hands upon her apron. Her sleeves were rolled up to her elbows and the moist touch of her hand did not hinder his admiration of her beautiful arm. Is she a natural-born coquette? was his mental inquiry; and then, under the frank expression of the girl's eyes, he felt himself blush a little at his self-conceit. He was cordially invited to call on his return, and he promised his entertainers—and himself—that he would. Sandy watched him striding down the trail until a near turn in the way hid him from sight.

"What did you say, father?"

"I was saying to myself that Mr. Mayo is rather a pleasant, bright young fellow."

"He must be, if you think so," said Dolly, her hands again in the dish-water, and she glanced over her shoulder to smile at him.

"What am I to understand by that, little girl?" and he stood over her, looking into her laughing eyes.

"It is as plain as your handsome nose. Young men like Mr. Mayo are rare."

"You make it hard for me to put my finger on you, little girl."

"I'm not a shadow, father dear."

"No, Dolly, but a woman, grown up and handsome."

"For which you deserve a hug and a kiss—let me wipe my hands." With one arm around his neck and her cheek nestled in the blonde beard, she patted his face as if he might have been a child she was holding close to her heart. "She will always be handsome to you, father dear."

"I trust so—but, about Beverly?" and the rough hand resting on the beautiful head held the cheek still closer to his.

"Yes?"

"I have my doubts of him."

"He asked me last night to be his wife." She had ceased to pat his face and both arms clung about his neck. There was a glitter in Sandy's eyes, but his voice was gentle:

"And what did my little girl say to him?"

"That I would tell you—can you not like him, just a little bit, father?" It might have been the young face he had been so long accustomed to see turned up to his and the pretty lips pleading for some child's favor, always resistless. But the bright eyes were running over now, and the ruddy lips quivered as he impressed a kiss upon them.

"Let me think, little girl," and Sandy gently released himself, strode out of the cabin, up the mountain side by a well-worn trail toward his

claim. A short distance and another trail, but a little less clearly defined, branched off to the left; Sandy followed the less-frequented path. It led to a bit of level ground which was cleared, but surrounded by a thick growth of pines and silver spruce. On the lower side some of the trees had been cut away, giving an unobstructed view of Mount Powell and a portion of the adjacent range. The music from the creek below tumbling over its rocky bed and the gentle murmur of the wind through the pines were the only sounds to break the quiet of the stately solitude. The dead needles had been swept away from this ground; the rocks protruding here and there wore patches of variegated moss, the wild larkspur was abundant along the edges and among the trees, and at one end there was a great bank of them interspersed with sprays of delicate white-petaled phlox. Here, where the flowers were more luxuriant, was a grave.

A little while after a boyish-looking figure dressed in rough overalls of brown cotton, a woollen shirt, old felt hat and boots of grain leather, and with rifle on shoulder, followed along this same trail until at the edge of the clearing. The intruder suddenly halted at the sight of the kneeling man, started as if to go to him, then turned and trudged up the mountain. Traversing a few rods Dolly halted, leaned the rifle against a tree and nervously wiped the blinding tears from her eyes, then went on to the summit.

The top of the mountain was quite level and stretched over many acres covered with aspens. The girl walked on until she reached the western edge and could look down into the adjacent valley. The slope below her was heavily timbered; she merely glanced into the shadows and seated herself in the midst of a little clump of aspens that afforded protection from the sun. With the rifle across her lap and the old felt hat serving as an indifferent cushion on the smooth trunk of the tree against which she rested, she looked listlessly at the undulating line where the pines on the distant hills touched the azure. Her own future was typified in the far-away reaches into which she was gazing and was quite as secret; she could see the merest outlines, not the innermost recesses. There were hills and valleys, sunshine and shadow, gorges and mountain streams, and, maybe, fearful cliffs between her and that distant line where earth and sky seemed joined in silent communion. And yet, under the August sun and through the tender purple veil under which the ruggedness reposed, the way seemed easy.

How long Dolly would have remained dreaming may not be guessed had she not been aroused by the breaking of a twig in the woods below. In the silence that reigned through the bosky solitude the sound of the snapping branch was startling. The girl put her hands on the rifle and was alert in a moment, but she did not move from her position. She watched in the direction of the

sound; the cause of the alarm might be dangerous or not. Presently, not fifty yards away, the head of a doe appeared from behind a large pine. She was moving slowly, now with ears erect and again whisking them back and forth, then with drooping head nibbling the rich banquet at her feet. Unconscious of a stranger in her retreat, she stood, fairly uncovered at last, with her side to the girl, who could see and mark the sweetness of the great dark eyes, who could admire the grace of every movement of the innocent beauty, and yet whose keen eye was gleaming down the smooth barrel of the rifle, its owner intent only upon shutting out the inoffensive life. It was a cruel thing to do; her finger was already nerved for the fatal pressure, when a fawn's head was exposed coming from behind the same tree that had concealed the mother. The slender finger was moved quickly forward and under the guard, the muzzle of the weapon was slowly raised until the butt rested on Dolly's knee.

"Not for the wide world, sweet mother, could I harm you," murmured Dolly, her face aglow with pleasure. "I'm so glad, baby, that you came in time—I wish I could kiss you." She reached out her hand as she whispered, but the beauties were gone.

Regretting that she had frightened the graceful visitors, Dolly was letting down the hammer of the gun when she, in turn, was startled by the sound of a human voice quite close to her. At the first word she manifested her alarm by a twitch

"Not for the Wide World, Sweet Mother."

of her shoulders, hardly perceptible, but did not condescend to turn her head toward the intruder.

"Why'ncher shoot, Miss Dolly?"

The speaker, coming forward, but maintaining a respectful distance, was an unkempt mortal in the ordinary garb of a miner; he might have been a young man from the appearance of his black hair and beard, but his face was wrinkled and his shoulders round.

"So it was you who frightened the doe!" she asserted, looking up at the man and exhibiting a shade of vexation.

"I'm sorry, Miss Dolly, but I see you wasn't a-goin' to shoot."

Dolly looked at him again—there was no question now of her irritation.

"How long have you been here?" and she stood facing him, the rifle thrown across her arm, her right hand upon the grip.

"Only just before the deer come," was the submissive answer.

"Why did you come here at all—were you following me, sir?"

"Not follerin', but I see you when you come by the claim—and——"

"Don't tell me a falsehood, sir," as the man hesitated. "I do not wish to be followed or watched—do you understand?"

"Yes, Miss Dolly, but it's nigh noon and——"

"No matter if it is near night," she interrupted impatiently; "I do not like your ways."

The man winced visibly at the last thrust and interlaced his fingers nervously as the girl turned away and started toward home. He stood watching her until she disappeared over the edge of the mountain and then followed slowly.

Sandy stood in the doorway and relieved Dolly of her rifle when she came up.

"Let us have dinner, little girl; I want to do some drilling for a blast this afternoon—it should have been attended to this morning. Did you see Jake as you came down?"

"I saw him on the other side of Aspen Hill."

"What was he doing there, I wonder? I want him to help me; he's handy with the drill. Ted has been to his cabin half a dozen times within the hour."

Without replying, Dolly went about quietly and deftly in the preparation of the dinner, her father giving no hint of what interested her most. Only when he regretted his neglect of the forenoon's work she thought he was about to say something to her. But she knew that she was not much out of his mind; he would take his time and it would be as he considered best. So when the meal was ready it was approached and enjoyed with the customary cheerfulness, and Ted had given notice to Jake.

CHAPTER II.

Basset Bar was immediately on Spruce Creek. The ordinary bed of the creek was a hundred feet wide. It was a turbulent stream, even in August, its descent being precipitous. Above the bar it was a beautiful mountain torrent, below it was turbid and a libel. Basset Bar intruded upon it, dug holes in the banks, tapped it above and brought water in ditches and pipes, and washed and sluiced and piled up boulders where they had never been before; tortured and swore at it, prayed and got drunk over it, gambled and brawled over it and every little while killed a man. Basset Bar was not architecturally symmetrical, but a marvel in pine logs and slabs. Paint was an undiscovered glory, except in the matter of signs; these were brought in ready made, by the acre, on cotton cloth; nine-tenths of them proclaimed on sale: "Imported liquors and cigars." The tobacco was a myth; the liquor was vice and murder condensed, and yet it was made and proffered by men who claimed to have been reared under the influence of Christian civilization.

In the summer days Spruce Creek, as if sentient, became enraged at times and resented the indignities heaped upon it; came down in volume and

overwhelmed the bar; swept away the temples and ground the logs into slivers, drowning, without remorse, the votaries whenever it could catch them and surrendering no subjects for funerals. But upon the abatement of its anger the shanties sprang up again, "business" was resumed and enterprise was exalted.

Jack Beverly came in one evening from his claim and submitted to a friend, under pledge of secrecy, a nugget of wire-gold as large as a hen's egg. Within an hour one-half of the citizens were eager for a sight of the find. Jack was obliging and the value of his claim went up, as did the owner, in the estimation of the Bar. When every man is looking after himself it is a relief sometimes to have some one else to look after—so Jack was considered, and was encouraged to call on Dolly. Even Sandy McLaughlin was curious and examined the nugget critically.

"Where did you find it, Mr. Beverly?"

Jack pointed out the exact spot.

"I'm going out to-morrow. I'd like to take this with me and show them outside what the Bar promises."

Jack demurred.

"What will you take for it—you know the weight?"

But Jack declined to part with the specimen, it was such a novelty. This was the first of Sandy's "doubts of him." Had Jack been older, possessed of more experience, Sandy's doubts might have

been certainties. The nugget ceased, in a few days, to be a curiosity, and Jack employed a Mexican, continued work satisfactorily, and every clean-up added to his wealth and increased the reputation of his claim.

The warm hours of the days were growing fewer, the nights cooler. The aspens gave hints of the frost and then the green leaves turned to yellow, grew parched, rattled in the wind and dispersed themselves among the brown pine needles. Winter was coming on and winter at Basset Bar was not to be coveted. Those who could, went out before the white crystals came to mantle the hills and festoon the pines with their immaculate garlands. But there was a goodly number remaining to work at disadvantage during the occasional warm days that might chance; on the cold ones, to excite and amuse themselves in the reeking air of the cabins.

One morning the sun failed to put in his customary cheerful appearance, but a light snow fell, and with it came a friend of Beverly's hired man. Toward evening the snow increased and at bedtime there was a foot on the ground; in the morning the one foot had increased to two, and by night Basset Bar was snowed in; the sky was clear, with a young moon; the mercury hovering about zero. It was early in the season for such a storm as far as the limited experience of the oldest pioneer could enlighten his fellows; near Christmas was the usual time, a little before or after, but

they did come earlier sometimes, as witness this one, and the earth would remain covered for the winter. There would be no communication with the "outside," except some dare-devil should take his life in his hand and attempt a snow-shoe journey. There would be four months, perhaps, of isolation; but provisions were plenty in the camp and game was abundant. Beverly's cabin was perched upon the hillside within a stone's-throw of his claim and the Mexican's quarters. Considering the locality, the abode of Beverly was comfortably furnished and possessed a generous fireplace. The owner with his other wealth had some shelves of books and two chairs. One of the chairs was made of a barrel and cushioned, and the cloth of the cushions might have been from the same piece that went to make up the faded pink gown already mentioned. Satisfied that he would not be disturbed, Beverly occupied his best chair, his boots off and his stockinged feet stretched out to the cheerful flame on his hearth. His table was drawn up close to his side and he was reading by the light of a kerosene lamp—another luxury in Basset Bar. Beverly was one among the few in the neighborhood who used a razor. His dark curly hair had been an annoyance, but discovering that the Mexican could aid him in this particular as well as in shovelling gravel, he elevated that individual to the occasional office of valet. With his hair cut and his mouth quite concealed by a moustache, his dark eyes, shapely legs and feet,

his enviable chest and shoulders, Beverly was admitted to be the finest-looking man in the Bar. He was not habitually a drinker, and gambled, with a limit, only to amuse himself and to entertain his friends.

Toward his customary bed-time he replenished the fire and a little later on he would bank it up for the night. Just then a knock sounded on his door. Bidding the visitor come in, the Mexican entered. The intrusion was unusual, and the novelty of it by no means diminished when the employer considered the inclemency of the weather. What did Jose want? Well, his friend was sick and would the señor be so kind as to come to his cabin and help him, if he could? What was the nature of his friend's complaint? Really Jose did not know, only his friend was hot and cold by turns and had pains in his head and back. Beverly averred his ignorance of medicine; he did not know of what possible use he could be, but he would go. It was very good of the señor, who pulled on his boots and floundered along the half-broken trail to the aid of a strange Mexican; the adventure had something of the touch of the Samaritan in it.

An unfamiliar and offensive odor assailed Beverly's nostrils the moment he entered the warm atmosphere. The stranger on the floor rolled up in his blankets was, without doubt, very sick; he had a burning fever, recognized even by the unskilled visitor, who knelt by the man's side, placed

his hand on his forehead and gently brushed back the damp black locks; by the fire light the sick man's face was crimson. Beverly remained in this position a few minutes talking with Jose. There was a doctor at the Bar, at least a man who claimed to be a doctor; Jose might find him by the instructions given, and Beverly would remain until his man returned.

Not knowing what else to do, but believing that cold would counteract heat in all instances, the young man placed a wet cloth on the other's head; when the sick man realized the cold touch of it he snatched it off and threw it aside. Beverly laughed and said that the "interesting bandit" might do as he pleased. The "bandit" muttered something the other did not comprehend—it might have been a blessing or a curse—and attempted to get up. Beverly now denied him the right to do as he pleased and pressed him back. Jose came in; he had found the doctor, but the doctor was engaged just then in a game of poker; he would come as soon as he finished the game.

Beverly trudged back to his own quarters without putting his hands in his pockets; he felt that he must not touch anything without first taking a dip into the wash-basin. The foul odor seemed to cling to him even out in the cold, and he fancied that he could taste it. The next day Jose reported his friend still very sick.

What did the doctor say was the matter with his friend?

The doctor, if he had any knowledge, had failed to communicate it, but promised to call again.

Was the doctor sober?

He was, as far as Jose could determine.

That evening, after the doctor's second visit, Jose called to Beverly over the intervening space between the cabins; he said that his friend would require constant attention, that the señor must wait upon himself for a while, must do his own chores. There was no hardship in this; Beverly was accustomed to waiting on himself and had considered Jose's first efforts in that direction an annoyance, but the Mexican seemed to enjoy it and was permitted to have his way. So the owner of the wire-gold nugget resumed his old habits as if he had never departed from them.

The weather continued cold for three days; when the temperature rose the clear blue sky turned to gray and the snow set in again. Jose remained close in his own cabin, and not being highly esteemed in the Bar he was not troubled with visitors. The new snow covered up the old trails and it was difficult travelling outside of the camp. Beverly had not been to Sandy McLaughlin's since the day before the Mexican was taken sick; more than a week had elapsed and he would go the next day. He must know what Sandy had concluded, if he had reached a conclusion. Sandy had said to Dolly the last time, and that was a month since: "Wait a bit, little girl."

In the circumstances Sandy was provokingly

slow. Certainly he would go up the next day and himself talk with Sandy, if need be.

When Beverly got out of bed "next day" he felt strange and "a little unsteady on his pins," as he expressed it. He was thirsty and started to the water-pail; one foot seemed fastened to the floor or weighed a hundred pounds; when he succeeded in lifting it, it became too light, even for a foot; the other foot served him in like manner and so they alternated disagreeably. What did it mean? He could not tell. His head was whirling by the time he reached the water; before tasting it he felt as if he could drink a quart—two swallows satisfied him; from whirling his head began to ache, every bone in his body seemed to be in rebellion, and his back! He thought he would make a cup of coffee, but the smell of the can was revolting. He did not care much whether he went to Sandy's or remained at home. The flush that came over him when he first arose was gone and now he was chilly; he raked the fire down, put on a few fresh sticks and seated himself in the cushioned chair. The sensations in his head were indescribable. Was he to be sick? He glanced around the cabin; it was not a very inviting place to be sick in, but the next moment he thought he would as lief be sick here as anywhere. He must know, however, what the matter was; he staggered to the door and shouted for Jose. The Mexican looked out, hesitated and then came to him. When he was close enough to

have a good view of Beverly's face he hastened his steps and prevailed upon him to go back to bed. The Mexican brought the doctor and for three or four days vibrated between the two cabins, giving the greater part of his time to Beverly, as his friend was improving.

The trails were beaten again in the camp and the weather was very cold and clear; the smoke would pour out of the rude, wide-topped, stone chimneys and then rise lazily and straight. Looking down upon Basset Bar, even in the middle of the day, one could rarely see a living thing, except, perhaps, a shelterless, long-haired burro on the sunny side of a cabin, his head drooping and his mind dwelling, no doubt, upon the inaccessible warmth on the other side of the logs, or wondering when and where he might obtain a meal. The cabins half hid under the snow seemed like exaggerated graves of a strange species, as they were in one sense, constituting a queer sort of cemetery wherein lay dead, as well as hibernating, a great army of hopes.

The way from Sandy McLaughlin's had not been trodden for three days; then Jake came down on snow-shoes. The news of Beverly's illness was the first thing he heard, coupled with anathemas bestowed upon the strange Mexican who had brought the disease into the camp. The people were not especially anxious on Beverly's account, but each man on his own, not knowing who might be the next victim. Had it been possible to correct the

affliction by taking the Mexican out and hanging him, he would have been cheerfully hanged. Returning Jake imparted his information to Sandy. Ted became possessed of a portion, and before night Dolly was aware that Beverly was dangerously ill and practically alone.

It was very strange to think of doing something her father would not approve of, difficult to give the thought shape and put it into execution; but she was resolved; she would go to Beverly and comfort him, if nothing more, with the knowledge that he was thought of. She would go after supper. The way was familiar, the moon would be up, the distance was hardly two miles and she as much at home on snow-shoes as any man in the mountains. She would go and no one but themselves would be the wiser.

Making sure she would not be needed further, Dolly went to her room. Ten minutes after, dressed in the brown overalls and boots and an overcoat, she slipped out of the window. With the snow-shoes the walking was not difficult, and she quickly placed a quarter of the way between herself and home. The moon was very bright and with her back to it every object was distinct. For quite a distance she could see between the dark trunks of the trees and, over the white carpet, could distinguish familiar individuals; just ahead was one of her old friends, leaning over as if the next wind would send it crashing to the ground; it was just where a trail from the mine, running

diagonally, intersected the one she was traversing. Very friendly and familiar was this old tree. It was just here she met him for the first time, and had leaned against the rough scales and listened to him, moved by a new sensation; he was very smooth compared to the others, very deferential, very modest. Now he was ill and alone.

The chances of her encountering any one were very remote and she went on fearlessly, thinking to place her hand on the old tree as she passed. Glancing a little to her left and up the mountain she detected an object moving along the other trail, or where the trail should be, and she halted. She felt a little nervous and missed her rifle; with that she would have been assured. The indecision was momentary; she recognized in the moving object a mortal like herself, coming down into the trail ahead of her and who, having reached it, waited as if for her to come up. She did not wish to be seen or recognized, and she and her father were known to nearly every one in the vicinity. That she was discovered was beyond question, but by whom? She must frame an excuse or turn back. The excuse was an easy matter and she moved on until within a few yards of the person, and recognized Jake.

Filled with disgust at the sight of him and angered at his obtrusiveness, she made up her mind to pass on without noticing him. But he stood directly in the faint trail, in his own tracks, in fact, made that afternoon. Dolly would not go

round him, and was compelled to halt. He stood facing her, the moon shone full upon him, she could see plainly the expression of his eyes and their ordinarily irresolute expression was gone. What did it mean? She was disposed to be nervous, but the sound of his voice was a specific against that:

"Where you goin', Miss Dolly?"

"None of your business, sir! Let me pass!"

"No, Miss Dolly, not this a-way," and he motioned with his thumb toward the Bar.

"How dare you!" and she reached out her hands menacingly.

"Because I love you, Miss Dolly——"

"You miserable wretch, get out of my path," and she put out one hand as if to push him aside.

"Yes, I'm all that, but I know where you're goin' and—you mustn't."

"Do you know that your presence is an insult to me—and you dare to tell me what I must or must not do—let me pass, I say!"

"I minded you, Miss Dolly—you hain't see me fur mor'n two months, 'cept oncet, at the mine—but you must mind me now."

"Do you dare to threaten me, sir!"

"No, Miss Dolly, but you mustn't, 'deed you mustn't, not fur your own sake—you don't know what's the matter with him."

"I know that he is ill and alone," exclaimed Dolly, chafing bitterly under the restraint and almost unconsciously giving utterance to her up-

permost thought. The next instant she could have throttled him for compelling her avowal. She moved to pass around, but Jake held out his hand as if he would detain her by force, if need be.

"I didn't want to tell you, Miss Dolly, but you make me—he's sick with small-pox—would he want you to come? I'll go 'tend him if you say so—I can nurse better'n you think fur. Say the word, Miss Dolly, say the word fur your father's sake—fur your dead mother's sake—say the word, Miss Dolly!" and the man stood bowed toward her with his outstretched hands lending emphasis to his appeal.

The shock of the announcement was manifested in the little start she gave; her arms hung limp, but she watched each movement of the man and the changing expressions of his face. It was a long speech for him to indulge in; there was something of his common nervousness in it, but he was impelled by an energy she had never noticed in him before.

She held out her hands to him:

"Jake, can you pardon me?" The prayer was so pitiful in its tones that the man wrung his hands in pure weakness.

"Don't, don't say that, Miss Dolly—say the word and let me go to him."

"No, you must not go—neither will I. Now say that you forgive me for my unkindness."

"Please, Miss Dolly——"

"I see you have—now let me thank you—from

the bottom of my heart—for being so true a friend to me—good-night."

"Good-night, Miss Dolly."

In turning, the girl, forgetting the webs under her feet, tripped and fell.

"That was awkward," she said, and was up before Jake could be of any assistance, but he had grasped her arm. She felt his hand tremble as he relaxed his hold, and she knew it was not with the cold; she knew that he stood watching her until a turn in the trail hid her from view, and again until she stood under her window. She wished that it were not so. The round shoulders and wrinkled face would ever after be lost in the expression of the great dark eyes, and the moon shining down upon them.

CHAPTER III.

Beverly received the announcement of his complaint from the doctor with a little laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" was the inquiry of the other, looking down at him.

"What is the use in doing anything else? Swearing cannot do the matter justice."

"You'll do—yours is a genuine case, but it will be light."

"Yes, and I'll turn out with a face like the bottom of a cullender."

"No, I think not. The window must be kept darkened and you must not attempt to read, 'till I tell you—do you know where we can get some milk?"

"Milk! what do you want with milk?"

"To feed you on—you should eat nothing but bread and milk, if we can get it."

"Bread and milk! Well, I know of but one place—Sandy McLaughlin's—but it will not do to go there."

"I'll see about that. You will require very little medicine. I will leave you what is necessary. If you should need me, send your man."

The next morning Beverly found it difficult to see; Jose came in and put aside the window cur-

tain, but that afforded no relief and it was put back. He made the comforting announcement that his friend had grown worse and during the night, had died—had died without a priest—poor Mariano! But his friend must be buried; how was he, Jose, to perform that office alone—and no good father to say a prayer even—and must the soul of his friend suffer until the breath of spring should thaw the snow and a priest be found to say a mass? He feared so, meantime Jose would pray for the repose of his friend's soul. Beverly thought it very considerate in his hired man, he admired his devotion to his friend, but he laughed and Jose followed his example without knowing why.

In the afternoon the doctor called to talk with Jose; he would find bread and milk each day at a certain hour in a certain spot on the trail leading toward Sandy McLaughlin's. But what could Señor the doctor recommend concerning the disposition of his friend's body? It must be buried. Jose had allowed no fire in his cabin since his friend's decease, the body would freeze!

Let it freeze, or better: set fire to the cabin and burn it up!

Jose was stricken with horror. That night with pick and spade he delved through the snow down to the hard earth; the cold had not penetrated far as yet and before midnight he had dug as deep as need be. Then lifting and dragging by turns, he put away his friend, wrapped in his blanket; with no candles burning, only the stars

looking silently down; and no prayers said, save the prayers of Jose; his friend's soul must have been encouraged. An hour afterward, dozing by Beverly's fire, a bright light penetrated the curtain window and Jose, aroused and looking out, saw his cabin in flames and congratulated his friend.

Beverly sleepless, wished to know the cause of the illumination; Jose told him.

Would not Jose use the cushioned chair? Certainly not—the other was good enough, and he dozed again before the fire.

An hour went by and Beverly called to him. Would he do the same service for him as he had done for his friend? If need be he would, but the Señor was not so ill as his friend had been; the Señor would get well—he would live to bury Jose, and he showed his white teeth pleasantly.

The sick man would have a taste of the bread and milk. Eating in the night was an innovation on the doctor's orders; three times each day only should he eat, but it was given him. When he had eaten he counted the hours to the time when he could have more and the time seemed a long way off.

It was very lonely, and very still save for the breathing of Jose asleep in the chair, and, occasionally, the ashes dropping down upon the hearth. With his scant beard and swarthy face, and the black hair thick and low on his forehead, Jose did not look, under the fire-light, like one to be courted, the other thought and turned on his pillow, while

his mind drifted, as restless as his body. The man awoke as the master moved and the latter caught a glimpse of the dark eyes turned toward him. Jose slept again, and Beverly stared at the round pine poles supporting the dirt roof. From being round they became square, clean-looking and equi-distant and between he could see the shingles; and, could it be! he heard the patter of the rain on the roof. It was a weird fancy, maybe, but Jose's eyes were there in the rafters looking down upon him, and presently they were not Jose's, the light in them was too tender and the face that was bending over him was sweet as an angel's; the sheets felt cool to his warm flesh and he put up his hand to the loving face and saw that the hand had grown wonderfully small, and there was something upon his forehead, a familiar touch, so gentle, so unlike that of any other palm! (whether toilworn, or delicate as the petal of a rose, it is all the same; vouchsafed us from only one source lovingly in the Divine order; God pity the man who has not known it; God help him who having known, forgets it). Soothingly it brushes aside the damp locks, and the sun coming out after the rain the flowers are fresher and become brilliant under the bright rays. And there by the window is the old honeysuckle with its red trumpets and bright green leaves through which creeps the fragrance from the meadow. And then the rippling brook beyond sings its loveliest matin song —but it was only the ashes dropping down.

The Señor has had a little sleep? that is well, and a pleasant dream, for there was a smile on the Señor's face. It was daylight—would the Señor now have his bread and milk?

The second morning when Jose floundered up the trail for the daily rations, he saw a man, with a stoop in his shoulders and hair and beard as black as his own, standing at a little distance. They exchanged greetings at half a dozen yards apart. Beverly would get on, was his answer to the man's inquiry. And, as the days went by and the two continued, one to inquire, the other to answer, the answers grew in cheerfulness, and, at last, the sick man was sitting up.

"How did he amuse himself?"

"With throwing bits of dirt at the mice," and Jose showed his satisfaction by displaying his white teeth.

Would Beverly be badly marked? No, only here and there, the Señor's beard would quite hide the scars. But the man with the stoop should see the Señor's back! it was as if he had been peppered with loads of small shot! Jake manifested no interest.

Ostracism from one's fellows may not be always hard to bear. But to feel one's self an object of personal abhorrence carries with it such utter misery that it may not be realized, except through experience. Beverly was lonely in bed and out; when he was able to walk to the window, the lead in his breast became as light as down, his heart

came up into his throat. The Bar at any time was not inspiriting, but under its mantle of snow it presented incentives to insanity. The invalid could see several men in the distance and wanted to shout to them and tell them how beautiful everything seemed; he felt as though he had been dead and buried, and resurrected unexpectedly. What though the mansions were rough cabins and the men may have been strangers, drunk for that matter,—he was alive again! It was Christmas morning and the sun shone; in the direction whence it came and where were those dear to him, maybe they had begun the celebration two hours before. And he wondered for a moment if they knew it was also his natal day. Would they rejoice with him in his new life? and he knew that they would. Here, in lieu of other means to express their rapture, the citizens emptied their revolvers in the air. Beverly, to be equal to the occasion, staggered to the door and fired a shot. It was answered by those below him and he saw a hat waved. He endeavored to raise the hammer a second time, but was too weak and brandished the weapon feebly.

Jose arriving, this time with a basket of provisions, dropped his load, took hold of Beverly and seated him in the cushioned chair. Was the Señor wild? Would he catch cold and kill himself? The Holy Virgin forbid; he must be wrapped up at once and the fire replenished.

The Señorita had sent, with her compliments

and with the compliments of her father, a nice chicken and some venison, with a host of other good things. The Señorita was charming on snow-shoes, and her smile! Jose was incapable! The man with the stoop in his shoulders had permitted him to address her at a distance, and she had wished him, Jose!—think of it! a Merry Christmas! and he was to say a Merry Christmas to the Señor, and God's blessing for him, Jose! And Jose took off his hat and crossed himself again devoutly at the remembrance. There was a little note too, for the Señor, which he had been admonished to cherish until delivered into the Señor's own hands.

Beverly's fingers trembled as he opened it—but he was weak, as we have seen. The note was very brief; the recipient smiled when he read it; then he read it again, and, Jose not looking, pressed it to his lips and placed it in the pocket of his woolen shirt—a very good receptacle for it, just over his heart. The Señor's eyes were not strong, said Jose a moment afterward. True, but the Señor was very happy and—very weak.

Beverly found his appetite excellent; it increased daily and he was puzzled at times to get sufficient to satisfy it, but his muscles, which were wont to be like whipcord, were soft. After Jose had consumed nearly everything in the cabin and had fumigated the little that was left, Beverly obtained some fresh clothes and was permitted to go about. The first time that he went out and through the

Bar, the purple spots on his face intensified by the cold, his friends did not shake hands with him, but greeted him cordially from a distance. One day he met a man who had plainly been in the same predicament; they were strangers, but they stopped, shook hands, swapped experiences and laughed together. It was exhilarating to find some one capable of fully appreciating the situation; now that they were well out of it there was a ludicrous side to the misery.

Weeks came and passed, and there was an occasional warm day, but the snow-storms would come and the cold followed; there was little use trying to work on the placers. Up at Sandy McLaughlin's mine the work was underground and cold weather was no hindrance. The owner, with Jake's help, had been delving all winter, there was promising looking stuff on the dump and no way to dispose of it. But a chance pocket quite filled Sandy's coffer and proved almost enough to cut off his ambition. Sandy, however, being much like other men, after hesitating, delved on. Beverly would come and go, the evenings were blissful and, almost before he was aware of it, Spruce Creek broke its fetters and would become roiled in the afternoons.

Jose expressed his intention of going outside. He was still solicitous touching the repose of his friend's soul. The water increased in the creek and Jose departed, promising to return in time for the summer work.

Later in the season a prospector came into Basset Bar and reported a man in the snow not half a dozen miles away; one hand was exposed and the prospector, after covering it up, had hastened in to report, Basset Bar being the nearest place. No one was missing from the camp; it must be that some stranger coming in had been caught, but that was no reason why the body should be left there to tempt wild animals, or fester in the sun when the snow should melt. Four men went back with the prospector, Beverly being one of the number. The evidences of a snow-slide were apparent in the vicinity pointed out; there was a clear space a hundred or more feet wide reaching from above the timber; the mountain side had been shorn of every tree and great rocks displaced and hurled into the gulch below the trail. The prospector had discovered the remains just below the trail near the edge of the slide farthest from Basset Bar; reaching the spot, the men went to work. The hand was first uncovered and Beverly felt a pang at sight of it. There was a fallen tree to raise, and that done Jose was lifted out and laid upon the snow. Beverly told them of Jose's mission as they stood looking down and speaking in subdued tones. Was his mission ever accomplished? No one may tell, but the purpose must have gone to the credit side of Jose's account.

He should not be buried here, isolated, although it would make no difference now to Jose; they conjectured what might have been his wishes.

For want of one formally ordained, Sandy McLaughlin was solicited and came unhesitatingly, bringing his Bible. So he who had borne more than his share of the burden in the winter camp was reverently laid near his friend.

The mountain sides where the sun's rays were not checked by the timber began to put on shades of green mingled with the dead-grass color. Then the genial beams were soon no longer to be resisted in the bosky galleries and the wild flowers peeped out from the upper edges of the snow fields and followed them down, while the streams became turbid and boisterous in their pæans. Basset Bar was awake again, the digging and the sluicing went on from morning until night and the delvers were in high feather revelling in pay-dirt, hoping for still richer finds. Beverly dug and sluiced with the others and felt his muscles hardening; the old-time color came back into his face and his closely-cropped beard hid what little defects the winter's siege had left on his skin. With the fading out of the marks went also the keen sense of the misery attending their growth and, with the rest, the better thoughts that often dwell with the convalescent. With him the period of weakness was like a return to childhood, in the utter dependence the perspective was filled with witchery; when the perspective closed in the surroundings became commonplace.

From being warm the sun became hot and beat down wrathfully on the bodies of the toilers.

Then in the cloudless sky the white forerunners of the summer storms began to chase each other through the blue vault and to find harbor about the summit of the range to temper the air. A hot, still day comes and the whilom fleecy heralds are denser and, overhauling each other in their wild course, hang together, as it were, for a common purpose. In the afternoon the erratic army has been concentrated, has ceased to be pretty and is grand in its sombre tones; in the bronzed base, overhung with blackness, the delvers recognize disaster; they shoulder their picks and shovels and whatever else is portable, and leave the sluices and other things, which have cost so much, to take the chances. Dead pine-needles and bits of wood come floating down, as if some mountain side had taken a bath and been relieved of its surplus litter; the water turns from crystal to gray and then black, reaching over all the bed of Spruce Creek. Then, from away up the stream, there is a faint moan rising and falling upon the air and at each upward flight grows stronger, until it no longer recedes but comes on increasing in volume, like the sound of an approaching gale through the pines; then it resolves itself into a roar and the Bar stands watching from the banks.

"It's coming!" men say in hushed tones, as if a loud word might still further incense the mystery whose exposure they are awaiting.

"Yes, it is coming;" it is here! a great wave of foul water, twenty feet high, churning boulders,

dead trees and drift gathered in its fury for forty miles! It is gone! and the Bar contemplates the wreckage, cheerfully, stolidly, angrily, as individual loss may prompt.

Beverly looked down upon his claim, over which the black mass had swept, and cursed his luck. He had hoped to "go out" the coming winter.

CHAPTER IV.

A rude sort of chivalry prevailed in Basset Bar. There was Indiana's wife and several other wives, half a dozen at most. Women who drudged with and for their husbands; not very attractive in the sordid surroundings, but womanly. They were always deferred to in the conventional barbarism. They deprecated of course Dolly's grain-leather boots, overalls and rifle—perhaps they envied her her freedom—it was a great pity that her mother died! Ah, good dames, no one felt that so keenly as Dolly did; she needed no reminders. But the men laughed, made way for her when they met her on the trail, and pulled off or touched their hats or made awkward little bows. Any one of them would have felt it a pleasure to put himself between her and insult or danger in any form; they would have done the like for any other woman; those who would not were few and their esteem was poison. It was safe for these lights of Basset Bar to come and go as they pleased, when each man in some sort felt himself delegated.

Happily, most men will respect a woman—when she respects herself, was Sandy McLaughlin's qualified avowal; he had faith in it and imparted it to Dolly. Whether it was innate or a spray from the

reverence to the mother was of no importance, the trait existed, that was enough.

In the environment there was no impropriety in Dolly's affecting the trail and the vicinity of the leaning pine of afternoons. As Beverly was master of his own time and could work when he pleased, his affecting the trail also was not marvellous. Could anything be more charming than Dolly dressed in the utmost simplicity, her rosy face smiling under the old felt hat, strolling down the trail, pausing to pick a wild flower, now and then snapping her fingers at the active little chipmunks, or holding one-sided colloquies with them as they sat up and stared at her? They must have considered her quite as inoffensive as themselves, for they would come very close if she sat down by the way; and a little mother down there by the pine would bring up her babies to interview her and partake of biscuit which Dolly rarely failed to carry. Whether these little folks discussed the merits of her cookery Dolly sometimes wondered, as they sat up with bits of it between their paws and ate and talked, but they always complimented her; she could understand that. The plucked wild flowers usually increased to a pretty bouquet at the pine and Beverly enjoyed them.

"Why do you pull the flowers, Dolly? They are abundant and look well growing."

Dolly looked at him with the hint of a blush in her cheeks. He had never before made such an inquiry.

"You need not take them, if you do not wish;" not poutingly, only ready to comply with his humor. But Beverly was too gallant, and his acceptance called out a pretty smile. He threw a little stick at the visiting family.

"That was unkind, Mr. Beverly. You should know they are guests of mine."

Beverly begged pardon; he was irritated; the flood of yesterday had destroyed two months' work. She would not quarrel with him about such a trifling act as driving away the little pests? No, she would not, but there was that in his act that opened a new door, and, although new doors were being continually opened to her, there was something behind this one—not offensive, but not pleasant; the disclosures heretofore were beautiful. However, the work of the flood was exasperating, unquestionably.

A gravel bar, even if it contained gold nuggets, was not something to be jealous of, but Dolly put herself between him and the gravel bar, at last. And Dolly was looking again from the brow of the Aspen Hill at the sky-line kissing the tops of the distant pines and through the dainty veil that made the way look smooth. But there are intricate paths to be traversed, "little girl;" the brooks are full and what might be beautiful streams are treacherous mountain torrents, and there are perils in every step, and cliffs by the way, not appalling perhaps when viewed from the brow of the hill, but on the edge, looking down! How is it then?

It requires what we are pleased to term nerve. Why do you start, Dolly?

She stood facing him—the "little girl" with the pretty blue eyes and beautiful mouth; the crimson which had suffused the innocent, open face, even down the throat, was changing to white. Had she been stung? Ay, and it was cruel; the venom of it made the warm blood surge and filled the temples as if they must crack, and back again to her heart. With her arm extended as rigid as the bole of the leaning pine against which they had rested, the slender finger pointing down the trail and her other arm across her bosom:

"Go! and never let me see your face again!"

"But, Dolly——"

"Go!"

The lips were set, the face white, the beautifully moulded jaws seemed square; and the sweet blue eyes! The dark ones could not bear the light in them and shrank as if they had been seared.

Striding down the trail, tripping and near falling once, Beverly went as he was bid.

"What a fool! What a fool!"

Oh, no, Beverly, not a fool! You are a man of sense, of generous impulses in the main, of some culture, sober, industrious! Not by any means a fool! The fault lies deeper. You had no right to set foot in the temple, much less to put your sacrilegious hands upon the jewels on the altar. Your touch was foul. It were better you had died owning the love of a pure woman, than to live and lose it through your own unworthiness.

Coming up the trail, when Beverly had traversed half the distance to the Bar, was the man with the stoop in his shoulders.

"Good-afternoon, pardner."

The greeting was cheery.

"Go to the devil," and Beverly brushed by.

"Go find him yourself—you damn puppy!"

Beverly turned—here was a vent for the gall which had found its way to his heart—he threw his hand back to his hip. The other stooped still lower and, seizing the assailant, lifted him clear of the ground and over his shoulder and threw him ten feet away. Beverly fell heavily and Jake stood over him, but the other did not move. Jake kneeled by his side, placed his hand over his heart, chafed his temples and forehead and brought the color back to his face.

"I thought you was called, pardner, sure; but I don't 'low no man to insult me—I spoke you civil—then I don't like that gun o' your'n—better put it away; there was nothin' to hinder my killin' you with it—then where'd you bin! But I wouldn't hurt a hair o' your head—not fer Sandy McLaughlin's mine—mind that, will ye?"

Beverly went his way, Jake his; the one bitter in his humiliation, the other wondering what was at the bottom of his adversary's savagery. Reaching the diverging trails Jake saw Dolly; her right arm was thrown over the old pine, her head resting upon it, the other hanging; her back was toward him, but the attitude suggested utter

misery. He stopped short—Dolly was not easily moved and there was no ordinary sorrow here. It was not his province to intrude upon it, nor would he have her suspect that he had even been a witness to it; looking where he stepped that not a twig might snap under his feet, he stole out of sight along the upper trail.

The sun was behind the Aspen Hill, the shadows beginning to deepen in the valley, and the air was turning cool, before Dolly moved from her position. Her face was white without trace of a tear-drop, the lips were set as they had been when she stood in irresistible majesty over the abject figure that had been, an instant before, the incarnation of nobility. She walked on, over the uneven path, resolute in step, around the bend and in sight of home. Sandy stood in the door, as was his custom when he came at stated hours and missed her; the white face was strange and moved him.

"What is it, my little girl?" Her arms were twined about his neck and the strange white face hid itself in his bosom.

"O father! father!"

"What is it?" But there was no answer, only the sobbing of the girl clinging to him. His rough hand patted her on the shoulder and his lips were pressed again and again upon the fair head.

"There, there—what moves you so, Dolly?"

"Beverly——"

"What of him?" and there came again that glitter into Sandy's eyes as he raised her face.

"Your doubts, father——"

"What did he do—tell me, quick." But the strong, young arms held him fast.

"He insulted me——"

"And you——Let me go, Dolly."

"I sent him away disgraced. But, O father——"

"You would not have him come back again!"

The head was raised suddenly, the arms about his neck stiffened and relaxed.

"How can you think so meanly of your child?"

"I was angry, Dolly—forgive me—I did not consider—I——" and, holding her head closer to his bosom, he caressed it again. "If your poor mother were with us! You need her now, darling—you need her now as you never will again!"

But Sandy felt the loving arms tighten about his neck; the refuge he offered was rugged but beautiful in its tenderness; true, it lacked something he could not furnish, yet it was a secure harbor, deeper and purer than any she could hope to find; she would have the same love for it, the same faith in it, a loftier reverence, if that were possible—and Sandy was in his turn strengthened.

The autumn tints began to show themselves in the leaves of the aspens and the mountain beech, before the color fairly came back into Dolly's cheeks; but withal there seemed less light in the house; it was quieter in the shadow of the sorrow that persisted in lingering there. Sandy realized it and he said they would spend the winter out-

side; but Dolly did not enter into the spirit of the proposal; even "you must go" failed in its mission and was turned off with the little laugh that had in it much of the olden buoyancy. The cabin and its associations were like her father's old coat, he always took comfort in it and a new one was sure to pinch, somewhere. Then Sandy understood—bless his heart.

Jake's presence was more common about the house than of yore. His claim, an extension on Sandy McLaughlin's, was not as promising as Sandy's; the vein would pinch on him and then he would expend all that the pay streak had rendered in making his way further in, living in hopes.

"I believe the blame thing'll peter out," he said more than once, and Sandy, while not denying it, gave him no encouragement.

It was risky, mining was—maybe he'd strike it, maybe not—there was no telling—was the sum of Sandy's replies.

But there is a fascination in the pursuit. Men had worked just as Jake was delving; at times hard pressed and lacking a pound of bacon and the friendly storekeeper a little discouraged, but rarely saying no. Then, a single blast, the clearing away of the rubbish and, Eureka! The storekeeper had "always know'd it," so had the now delighted possessor of wealth—and Jake was working up to that final blast.

He was deserving, no doubt of it—his labor had

been honest and self-denial his constant companion. The ground he was in puzzled him at times; it gave tokens of promise and then it "went back on" him. But if he struck it, even after all the time and patience expended, he felt it would be more than he merited; and he built very beautiful castles with his treasure. Yet not more beautiful, Jake, than you deserved to enjoy.

Jake and Ted had always been great friends; he had taught the boy to play checkers, and the youngster had grown up to his teacher, so that it was quite an equal match between them in their games. And Jake had promised to come down this evening and "do him up." The board and men were out, the lamp lighted and Ted waited. Dolly sat with needle and thread and Sandy, a little heavy under a good supper, was half-dozing in his chair.

"I wonder why Jake don't come?" This inquiry of Ted's was addressed to no one particularly and was treated as a boy's impatience bubbling over. Half an hour went by and his promised adversary still failed in his appointment. Ted could not put up with farther delay—he was going to Jake's cabin; maybe Jake had forgotten, but that was one unheard-of fault in him.

Out under the starlight and over the short, familiar trail, the boy trudged, whistling. But Jake's cabin was dark. Had the owner, tired by his day's work, gone to bed? Ted listened but he could hear nothing; he put his hand against

the door, it yielded readily and squeaked on its wooden hinges. He called softly; there was no answer; then louder, with no gratifying result. Well, he must have gone to the Bar—there would be no checkers to-night and Ted trudged back disappointed.

Sandy, awakened from his doze by the lad coming in, was advised that Jake must have gone to the Bar, there was no light in the cabin and no response had been given to his repeated summons.

"He must have gone late, then, because I heard a shot just after supper," was Sandy's conclusion. "Maybe he has struck something and is up at the mine yet; he don't take much stock in the Bar, as a rule. Be a little patient, lad, he'll be down soon, it is hardly eight o'clock, the days are getting short."

Sandy, to awaken himself fully, went to the door and looked out into the clear sky. "The nights are growing cool—we must soon begin to have our winter evening comforters, Dolly—I like the old fire-place."

"And I—the fire makes the room cheerful."

"What time is it now, father?" The inquiry came from Ted, of course.

"Just ten minutes past eight," was Sandy's response, consulting an old silver watch, winding it and replacing it on the mantel. "If you can't stand it any longer, old fellow, you'd better go up to the mine and set your mind at rest."

"I believe I will," and he trudged off again.

Chatting with Dolly, the minutes slipped away —ten, fifteen——

"Hark! is not that Ted calling?" and Dolly held up her needle.

"Yes."

"Father! father!" it was very plain now and the boy was not standing still.

Sandy went to the door and throwing it open answered.

"Come, come quick—Jake—at the mine! Oh, he's killed, I know—I heard him groan," and the boy's face was white as he came panting into the lamplight.

"How can he be killed, boy, if you heard him groan, as you say—you're frightened—Dolly, give me the lantern."

It was ready almost before the demand was made and the hand that delivered it was steadier than her father's.

"Shan't I go with you?"

"No, I don't think it necessary," and Sandy strode off, finishing his sentence as he went.

He was at the mine in a few minutes, and holding the lantern above his head peered into the tunnel.

"Jake!" No answer.

"Jake, I say!" and he stepped into the opening, calling as he advanced. A dozen steps and the dim light reached Jake, lying face down. "He is dead, sure enough!" and Sandy, placing the lantern by his side, gently took the fallen man by

the shoulders to turn him over, but Jake moved of his own accord, and his face was a ghastly sight.

"Jake! Jake! don't you know me? For God's sake how did this happen?" But there was no answer save the poor fellow's moans. Sandy lifted him in his arms and carried him to the mouth of the tunnel, laid him down very gently and went back for the lantern. Then he called:

"Dolly! Dolly!"

Borne out on the still night from the strong lungs, the name went on through the wooded aisles and came back to him, growing fainter, and at last it was like the whisper of some elf persistent in mockery. Again the clear voice sounded and "I am coming, father," came to him before the echoes ceased.

It was no spectacle for the girl to look upon and Sandy, with the lantern, took a few steps to meet her.

"Take the lantern and light the way to Jake's cabin, Dolly—he is badly hurt."

She did not pause to question. Sandy lifted the limp form and moved off with it. The burden became heavy but the broad shoulders held up, though the strong limbs quivered as he laid Jake upon the rude bed.

"Tell Ted to go to the Bar and bring that doctor," he panted. "Give me the lantern."

Sandy with a basin of cold water and a coarse

towel was mopping the bleeding face, when he felt a touch upon his arm.

"Let me have the basin, father," and Dolly, holding a kettle of warm water and clean soft cloths, took the vessel from his hand.

"This is no work for you, little girl; you must go home."

"It is work for me, father." Sandy looked at her and gave way without another word.

"Please build a fire, father, he is cold," and she threw the blankets over him.

The touch of the warm water must have been soothing; very tenderly the steady hand moved over the burnt face, the closed and swollen eyes, the cuts under the scorched hair and beard, over the parched lips.

"Let me have a cup of water, father."

She dropped a little on the hot tongue and the muscles about the mouth twitched perceptibly; a little more and the moistened mouth gave token of relief.

"Can you speak, Jake—do you know me?"

"Miss Dolly." It was only a whisper.

"The doctor will soon be here; can you tell me what more to do?"

She bent quite low to catch the response, and her hand was very white and small resting in the calloused palm, not so insensible though that it could not feel the gentle pressure that greeted his whisper; and the fingers that were wont to be so strong, closed feebly and held the shapely ones.

"His eyes, father—he complains of them." For the first time her own were moist and her lips quivered.

* * * * * *

The manuscript ended here.

"Where is the rest of your story, Major; is this all?" I inquired in the morning.

"Yes, is it not enough?"

"Certainly not—you do not tell the result of Jake's injuries; you—why, this is no way to conclude a story; it is not concluded; you haven't even married Dolly."

"Haven't I—you conceive marriage the chief end of woman? I could not aspire to a girl like Dolly."

"I'll so inform your wife—she should have been married, and have lived happy ever after."

"Of whom do you speak—my wife?"

"Oh, bother your wit."

"Well, I do not know that I can gratify you, my boy; I think you will have to let me off. There comes the team to take us to our promised breakfast. I can tell you, though, that the wire-gold nugget was manufactured."

It was an excellent breakfast, in an exquisitely furnished room, which, of itself, might stimulate one's appetite. The biscuit were delicious and the coffee incomparable. But she who presided gave it the charm, aided by the dignified dark-eyed host, the Major's former partner and life-long friend.

This home was set in sight of the grand mountains, and there were others at table: a fair-haired lad and a dark-eyed girl. There were also other guests in the house: a gentleman with broad shoulders and a remarkable development of chest; his hair was a little gray and thin about the temples and his beard was heavy; and there was yet another gentleman whose hair and beard were white as snow and to whom all deferred, and this one had a stoop in his shoulders and was blind.

THE OWNERS OF THE JACK-POT LODE.

Mt. Powell.

THE OWNERS OF THE JACK-POT LODE.

AS GLEANED FROM HOLD-OUT JOHNSON.

I.

Some said it was financial distress, others whiskey, that impelled Dick Covington to rush up the mountain side through the early snow. He halted at the shaft-house of the Irish Belle and asked a man whom he found there to hide him and stand guard over him; he declared that his hat was already full of bullet-holes and took it off for the man to examine, and while the man was wondering Dick Covington started off with the avowal: "They are coming!" and that was the last ever seen of him.

Did he perish?

Nearly every able-bodied man in Basset Bar, and able-bodied men were in the majority, started in pursuit; they tracked him through the snow until a high ridge was reached which the wind had swept clean, and there the tracks were lost. Ugly gorges were plenty in the mountains and men could not reach them in the winter, but dur-

ing the following summer a few felt enough interest in Dick Covington to explore these secluded places. One day a man came in with a bleached skull which he had found in Hell Cañon; no other bones were visible in the neighborhood, no boots, not even a shred of clothing by which the former owner of that skull could be identified. Of course Dick Covington perished; how could it be otherwise? Did he not go up that mountain in the beginning of winter without an overcoat or blankets, without food and even bareheaded? No one had seen him in any other mining camp, though, for that matter, there were no other mining camps within miles. Wasn't there the skull and would he abandon his wife and kid? Certainly not. With a grim sort of regard the skull was buried and a rough head-board set up in the cemetery of Basset Bar with an inscription by the local poet:

"Here lies the remain of Covington, Dick
Who died, not sick
But perished in the winter snow,
We mourn to know."

Now that Dick Covington was dead, what would become of the widow and the kid? Why, she would take care of herself just as she had always done and would have one less mouth to feed and one less back to cover. Dick Covington came to the Bar wearing a plug hat, that's what he did, and enabled that community to possess, for the first time, a piece of apparel forming, so to speak,

a connecting link between civilization and barbarism. He was, in consequence, known as Plug Covington, rather than Dick, but when he died his name was restored to him. The plug hat carried an inspiration; it wore out in time and with the loss of it the owner relinquished his claim to the dignity which is supposed to walk erect under such a polished escutcheon. It must be uncomfortable to get drunk in a plug hat; no man would wantonly get drunk in one—at least no sane man. A drunken man in a plug hat is merely a creature of the imagination, the conception is reserved for illustrations of Babbett, and such fellows, meandering home from the club just before daylight, down East.

Dick Covington, with the loss of his rudder, drifted from bad to worse, and Mrs. Covington took in washing when she could get it, and she was a very good washer. After Dick perished she took in boarders and the kid flourished. Without any one of his own years to hold him in check, he became old at three years of age; at six years the most scientifically profane man in Basset Bar was weak in the presence of the kid. It was affirmed that "he could swear the bark off'n a gum log," had there been any of that intractable timber in the woods; he smoked a pipe and actually had wrinkles about his eyes.

Early in his career he became attached to Tincup Harris. Why was he called Tincup? Well, "because he took his'n that a-way." Tin-cup was

afflicted with sporadic attacks of financial address; if he had not purchased a share in a doubtful claim, he was on the point of striking it rich; his purchases were on time always, and his failures were inspirations. He invariably consulted the kid before investing or setting his pick into the ground, and cheered the "old feller" with the assurance of better luck next time; then he proceeded to get drunk.

The kid went one day, in company with the financial partner, up a bare mountain side and told him to dig in a certain place.

"Whacher want me to dig here fer, old feller?"

"They's a mine down there."

"They ain't nothin' there."

"Yes, they is, now you dig or we won't be pardners no longer."

Tincup dug a hole ten feet deep, with no beneficial result; but he put up a discovery notice, staked off a claim and recorded it in their names with a promise to pay the recorder some day. No man ever made a promise with a stronger purpose in his mind of fulfilling it, than Tincup.

Among his other virtues, Tincup was addicted to angling and the kid was company. He had fished the child out of Spruce Creek early in their friendship and Mrs. Covington was grateful; the kid might go for trout when Tincup went, but not at any other time. On these excursions, if the lad became sleepy, Tincup would recommend a special tree as affording the degree of shade neces-

sary to comfort, then he would whip the nearest riffle or pool by the hour, regardless of success. Coming out of one of these siestas on a certain occasion, the kid startled Tincup, sitting on the bank, by making an inquiry:

"Tincup, is they such a thing as angels?"

"What's the matter, old feller, been dreamin'?"

"Mother says they is, you know."

"Then they must be."

"When I laid down yonder a little while ago I heard sumpin."

"Heard sumpin! what d'you hear? All I hear was the crik."

"That's it, Tincup, they was voices."

"What! in the crik?"

"Yes."

"You was dreamin', old feller."

"No, I wasn't, I was lookin' up in the sky and heard 'em, they jist comed an goed."

"Well, I never hear 'em—what d'they say?"

"I dunno, only they seemed callin' loud, then whisperin' among theirselves."

"Well, I'm ——! How you feelin', old feller—ain't sick?"

"No, I'm bully, my sweet Columbine—But I say, Tincup."

"Say on, old feller."

"I wancher to dig some more on that claim."

"Which one?"

"Why, you know—Jack Pot."

"What's the use workin' that?"

"I want yer to."

"No use, old feller."

"See here, Tincup Harris, —— you, go an' work that claim, or ——."

When Tincup ceased laughing he ingenuously complimented the kid:

"Can't yer swear, though!"

"Yer haven't heard me yit, an' don't yer fergit it—lemme give yer a marker ——. Now'll yer go?"

The "marker" was not personally complimentary to Tincup, and he avowed resentment. Then:

"See here, old feller, don't lets me and you quarrel."

"You begun it."

"Yer a liar from away back."

"They shan't no man call me that—go heel yourself," and they separated. But Tincup watched him admiringly down the trail and out of sight of the creek.

"I wonder, now, what he'll be up to," mused Tincup, "tellin' me to heel myself!" and with a pleased expression on his face, he followed.

Within an hour he learned that the kid was searching the main thoroughfare of Basset Bar, a revolver strapped to his waist and promising to kill on sight the man who had questioned his veracity.

In the course of his wanderings the kid encountered Luke Butterfield. This gentleman, except when there was snow on the ground, and even

then on occasion, wore thin-soled boots with his trousers tucked into them; ready-made clothing appeared upon him jauntily—the boots, being dainty, were the secret. Luke's eyes exposed but two colors: white and black and there was a spice of viciousness in them.

"Who you lookin' for, kid?"

"Tincup Harris, ——."

"What'll you do when you find him?"

"Do! take the top of his —— head off, ——."

"See here, my son."

"I ain't no son o' yourn."

"No, bet your life—if you was I'd learn you."

"Y-e-s yer would ——."

The kid felt himself suddenly lifted from his feet and found his face on a level with Luke's. He began to kick, but a sudden shake made him think that his neck was dislocated and the grip on his arms was agonizing. He began to whimper.

"Now you go home—I'll take this, and if I ever see you with the like again I'll pound you to a pulp. Git!" The kid obeyed reverently.

Tincup sauntering along a short time after was hailed by Luke.

"I say—your pardner's been huntin' you—seen him?"

"No, but I hear it."

"I took this gun from him, take it and find the owner."

"This is Dick's."

"What the devil makes you fool with the boy so, Tincup?"

"What else'll I do? He hain't nothin' to stand to in the way of sport—no marbles or nothin'."

"Send outside and get 'em."

"What's the good? who'd he play with? He wouldn't take no stock in it, nohow."

"He is goin' to the devil."

"Jest like the rest of us—only we're there."

The next day Tincup and the kid went up the mountain side and sat on the dump of the Jack Pot Lode.

"We'll have to put up a winlass, old feller, an' git a bucket—the hole's gittin' too deep to throw the dirt out."

"All right, we'll git 'em—I say, Tincup, lookin' down that hole 'minds me of Joseph."

"Joseph, Joseph! who d'yer mean, Joe Seggs as runs the Gem?"

"Gem ——! no; the Bible Joseph—him as his brothers throwed off on."

"I don't know him."

"Then ther was another Joseph."

"Was ther? What d'he do?"

"He was the father of Mary."

"Mary, what Mary?"

"Why the Bible Mary—what's the matter with yer?"

"Nothin', old feller, 'cept yer prospectin' ground as is new to me."

"Don't yer know the Bible?"

"I've hearn of it."

"Why, where was yer raised, Tincup?"

"Boston."

"Boston—where's that?"

"Way off yonder."

"How'd yer git here?"

"Kind'r strayed, I guess—but what about Mary?"

"She had a baby."

"Was she married?"

"Married!—you old gum bile—how'd she have the baby 'less she was married?"

"I dunno—who'd she marry?"

"Joseph."

"What! her own father?"

"Who said anythin' about her father?"

"You did."

"Yer a liar."

"We're even—but what about the baby?"

"Well, he was a nice baby and his father an' mother was poor, an' they had to go 'way from where they was livin' because a old duffer was goin' to seize her and make her go to a place where a star shined down on it——"

"Oh, give us a rest, old feller, ain't the stars shinin' allers and everywhere 'cept when the nights is cloudy?"

"But this was partickler to pint the way so the baby's friends 'd find him. An' when they got there the taverns was all full, an' they had to take up with the stable an' the baby was bornd there."

"Where?"

"In the stable."

"That's cause they was poor—money'd a fetched the bridal chamber!—where was it, old feller?"

"Oh, away, away off."

"Well —— the odds, it's the same all over."

"Bet yer—then ther' wer' a other old faker as they called a king—you know what's a king?"

"King! what yer take me fer? Gimme four queens to back it, an'——"

"Can't yer think'r nothin' but poker, you old Mormon, with yer four queens?"

"Well, amble, old feller."

"This was a sure-enough king, a live king, an' he wanted to take off the top of the baby's head, an' he killed a raft of babies tryin' to find this one, an'——"

"What'd he want to kill the babies fer?"

"Why, a other old faker told his nibs that the baby was goin' to jump his claim——"

"See here, old feller, whatcher givin' me any way—a baby jump a claim!"

"He was a-goin' to grow up an' jump it."

"Cheese it, old feller."

"Oh, well, if yer don't want to hear no more—it's Bible——"

"It don't stand to reason, old feller, but go on, go on."

"Well, his nibs didn't git the baby anyway, an' the herders and everybody fetched him lots o' things, an' he growed to be a man, an' when he

got done, he went about doin' good to everybody, feedin' hungry people an' nussin' sick ones, an' that kind o' racket, an' then they took an' killed him to save sinners, an' his name was Jesus."

"Jesus, wer it—I've hearn of him—but who's been a stuffin' yer with all this, old feller?"

"Mother."

"Oh!"

"Don't yer believe it, Tincup?"

"I dunno."

"She says it's true as Gospel."

"Then you take an' believe it, old feller—yer can't do better'n what she tells yer."

"How 'bout swearin', Tincup? She's got it in fer us on that."

"What's the harm?"

"She says it's wicked."

"Wicked, wicked—yes, I tumble—but when I git mad nothin' does me so much good."

"Same here."

"Suppos'n' we swear off, old feller, 'cept when we're mad."

"Shake."

"But see here, old feller, what we goin' to do about this claim—you can't handle a bucket on a win'lass if we get it—we'll have to hire a man——"

"Hire ——!"

"See here, old feller!"

"I forgot, Tincup, wishermay die—besides 'hell' ain't swearin' is it?"

"It's mild—but mebbe we can git a well bucket an' you can work that."

"You bet I can," and he did.

The men of Basset Bar had long since branded Tincup as a loafer with no aim in life except to eat and get drunk. But owing to poverty, his only source of credit, he was, of late, commonly sober, and would have often been hungry save for the widow. Could anything be more exasperating than to see the blessed idiot digging with that kid on a barren hillside? The only return he could make the widow was to chop her firewood, and he was not zealous even in that direction—it was too much like meritorious work. It was predicted that the windlass would some day get away from the kid and knock out his brains.

But the well-mated couple worked on through the summer—one day in the prospect hole and two in fishing.

The hole grew to be twenty feet deep and Tincup and the kid sat on the dump casting about in their minds for means to timber it; it was not safe. Perched on the hillside, the Bar lay quiet under them. The aspens, touched by the frost, had already begun to put on their gold color, and the distant hills stood dreamily under the blue veil shimmering in the sun of the autumn afternoon.

"How'll we git the timber, old feller? They's plenty of it all around, but 'tain't jest here where it's wanted."

"Nothin's where it's wanted—I wish't I had a nugget big as our house."

"What'd yer do with it?"

"Give it to mother—what'd you do?"

"I dunno—git drunk, I guess."

"An' blow it in on poker, that's what yer would—what's the use of workin' anyway, Tincup, it don't come to no good?"

"That's what I say."

"Look at mother."

"Where is she?"

"At home, Old Quartzite, where'd yer s'pose she was?"

"You said, 'look at her.'"

"What if I did—she ain't bound to be in sight, is she?"

"Cross, ain't yer?"

"I don't give a——"

"Hold up, mind the bet."

"Well, I'm mad, an' it goes."

"Can't yer pinch yer mother fer the timber?"

"No, she hain't got enough to buy winter shoes—'sides she don't take no stock in this mine."

"Hole in the ground, you mean—wonder who that is comin' up the trail."

He was a short, stout man with a thin beard and bronzed face, a squint in one eye, and was dressed like every one else. He halted at the dump, glanced at it and then at Tincup.

"What have you here?" The stranger took up

a handful of the earth and sifted it through his fingers.

"Dirt," answered the kid.

"Who may you be?"

"Splitter McGinnis—how does it strike yer fer a all-round name?"

"You need a thrashing."

"No he don't, it's somebody else," interposed Tincup. The stranger went on.

"That feller's too fly," said the kid.

"Mebbe he wanted to buy a mine."

"Let's call him back."

"Hold on, old feller—if he does, we'll see him later."

The next time that Tincup and the kid visited the hill the former ran across a discovery hole to the left of their claim. One "Thomas Sterrit" it seemed, "claimed eight hundred feet on the line of this lode," to say nothing of "dips, spurs, angles," and the like, and he so notified mankind in general by a penciled notice on a stake driven into the edge of the discovery hole.

"Thomas Sterrit—he must be the chap as wer here day 'fore yesterday talkin' about thrashen, old feller; wonder what he discovered? Let's see where he set his stakes."

In tracing the stranger's location, they discovered two others.

"See here, old feller, sumpin's goin' on here. I kind'r feel as mebbe we've struck it—gimme a chunk o' that dirt!"

The next day Tincup caught up the kid on sight and hugged him. "What in —— you doin' of!" and the kid struggled in the other's arms.

"I knowed we was gittin' there, old feller."

"Y-e-s, yer did; who done the bossin'?"

"You done it, old feller, it's yourn."

"Now you lemme down, will yer—I ain't no baby to be squeezed and slobbered on to."

"All right, old feller, but I couldn't help it, yer know, nobody could. We can take ten thousand dollars fer the Jack Pot."

"But we won't."

"No! you *bet* we won't!" and Tincup made no pretence of disguising his admiration as he looked cheerfully down upon his "pardner." "We'll work her for all she's worth."

"Git a hundred thousand out'n her and then sell?"

"Right ag'in, old feller," and Tincup nursed his beard, while he gazed at the marvel of acumen. "But see here, Tincup, you put a corker on that gullet o' your'n or you'll be doin' sumpin' yer hadn't orter and luck'll go back on yer."

"Yer head's level, old feller."

There was no lack of means now, and the Jack Pot improved every day. The hillside was no longer a lonely place and its wealth was so unexpected that everybody was dazed, and Basset Bar swarmed with strange faces. The neighborhood was gophered with prospects, but none showed up as did the Jack Pot. The snow began to fly and

winter set in. Mrs. Covington rented her cabin and boarded with her tenant.

One day the kid complained of his throat; the next day he looked like wax; even through the tan the skin was beautiful. The men of Basset Bar no longer spoke of him as the kid and remembered only his cuteness: "poor little fellow."

Salem said it was a great pity he hadn't been baptized before he died.

"What'd you baptize him fer?" inquired Tincup Harris. Salem explained.

"He'd a got there before you, you —— Yankee, if you'd a died a year ago. Dousin' a man in February with ice in the river won't make him clean—take a tumble to yerself."

And the widow, what became of her? "Well, she up and married Tincup."

In the name of reason, was not her experience with one drunkard enough?

"You might ast me somethin' easier, pardner. Some wimen is allers wantin' to do somethin' fer somebody, and that was Mrs. Harris. Hows'ever, Tincup never come home drunk but onct—Mrs. Harris reminded him of his promise to the little boy as died."

II.

"EVERY gentleman should have some knowledge of the law," says a learned commentator, but every man of experience avows that the less one has to do with the law the better. In his original simplicity man needed but few laws, but it would seem that the more civilized we become the more laws we need. There is an incongruity here that leads one to question the integrity of our civilization.

Basset Bar was in many respects primeval, and still, what we call the laws of civilized communities were supposed to obtain. The friction was patent and at times became so violent that it operated with the efficacy of an air brake. Then simplicity would assert itself and the wheels turned again, but always gratingly. The time never was when the law fitted the circumstances perfectly and it is reasonable to conclude that the millennium is no nearer than when the Norman William was a law unto himself, or Moses followed the trail up Sinai.

Where law is to be dispensed lawyers will congregate, and Basset Bar had its complement, like any other mining camp, and now and then it might be possible to find a lawyer among these

lawyers. One of these in Basset Bar had a consultation one day with a client. This client wore long, dark hair and a beard very much tangled. The eyes of this client were vicious at times and again weak. No reliance whatever could be placed in his gait; if he started for an object he preferred a diagonal course or went by and returned by a roundabout way. Whether he could wipe his lips was a matter of uncertainty as well; his hand would jerk toward his mouth, seem to repent undertaking the journey and would seize a few straggling hairs of the beard. The clothes of this client were shabby even for a mining camp, his boots were apologies and his manner generally objectionable. But he was a client, as witness:

"I'm heeled, jedge," the honorable title being commonly applied to any one sipping at the fount of the legal beatitudes.

"What is your name, please?"

"Johnson," and there was a leer in the eyes, that a moment after were watery; "Johnson, an' don't you fergit it; I'll swear to it if need be, but there ain't no call in this case."

"I require of you twenty-five dollars in advance, Mr. Johnson."

"There you are, jedge—now yer my lawyer, ain't yer—yer can't throw off on me, can yer?" There was an air of proprietorship pervading Mr. Johnson, but a doubt trod upon the heels of it; the money remained on the table, between them.

"What do you want of me, Mr. Johnson?"

"Advice, that's wot I want."

"Well, sir?"

"The law is what I want; I'm a law-abidin' citizen; the law I will have." He emphasized the avowal by clenching his hand feebly and striking the table feebly, and the hand remained there trembling even with the table to support it.

"I think, Mr. Johnson, that you need a physician more than you do a lawyer."

"I know what I want; I've paid and I can pay; give me law."

"Well, Mr. Johnson, tell me your trouble," and the lawyer, with an amused expression in his face, filled a pipe, lighted it, and lifted his feet to the top of the table.

"Trouble, yes, no end of it."

"Yes?"

"Now, jedge, supposin'——"

"We will suppose nothing; tell me your trouble."

The eyes of this client were suspicious in expression, but the next instant the vacillating hand sought the mouth, and rested on the chin instead.

"But I'm supposin', an' I can't reach it no other way, jedge—let me suppose."

"Go on, then."

"Supposin' —I'm supposin'—fer I wanter be square, fer I don't want to be throwed off on."

"Well, sir, suppose."

"That's it—supposin' a young 'oman owned a mine an' then up an' passed in her chips, who'd the mine b'long to?"

"How old was this young woman?"

"Lemme see—say about seven year, or risin' thet."

"It would go probably to her father."

"Thet so, jedge? to her father? well an' good. But supposin'—mind I'm supposin'—supposin' her father wer' dead, how then?"

"Then the mother would inherit."

"What's thet?"

"It would go to the mother."

"Ef the mother was dead, too, then what?"

"Then to the brothers and sisters, if she had any. What next?"

"I'm gittin' thar, jedge, bet yer life. Ef the father and mother was both livin'—how's thet?"

The lawyer laughed and answered: "The father would take the mine."

"Afore the mother, jedge?"

"Yes."

"Well an' good. Now supposin' the mother up's and marries ag'in, how's thet?"

"That would make no difference so far as the title to the mine was concerned—she might be charged with bigamy," and the lawyer laughed again; certainly this client amused him.

"Bigamy? you don't mean it?"

"Certainly I do, Mr. Johnson."

"What's the law do with bigamy?"

"Punishes the bigamist by sending him to the penitentiary."

"But a woman—how's thet?"

"The law makes no distinction."

"Thet's so? fer a fact? fer how long in the penitentiary?"

"Oh, say two years."

"Can't yer make it longer, jedge? say ten, twenty—fer life!" and the trembling hands were reached out toward the counsellor, and the vicious look in the eyes came and flitted.

"You are very interesting, Mr. Johnson—do you wish to know anything further?"

"Yer can't say fer life, jedge?"

"I have nothing to do with it, the law fixes the term."

Mr. Johnson's hand went on a tour and failed in its mission as usual.

"I want to be square with everybody—yes, I do—two years and the mine," mused Mr. Johnson.

"What more do you wish?"

But Mr. Johnson had started toward the door and was bringing up at the window; the lawyer undertook to guide him, but Mr. Johnson evaded him and bolted. In a few minutes he returned:

"I wanter be square with yer, jedge, I'm a square man, I am—supposin' it was a boy and not a young 'oman, how's thet?"

"It would make no difference."

"Thet's so? Well an' good—I'll see yer some other time," and Mr. Johnson, essaying to be polite, hit himself in the eye, then he went away.

The lawyer's office was his lodging room as well,

and in the evening he found another stranger awaiting him. It was a good day for clients.

"You had a man to see you this morning of the name of Johnson," affirmed this man unceremoniously and in a tone that left no room for denial.

"Yes, a Mr. Johnson called on me; he seemed rather the worse for liquor."

"Damn him."

"He is a friend of yours, then?"

"Yes and no—but I feel an interest in him and have been trying to sober him. He made known his business?"

"I cannot say that he did."

"I will do it for him."

"As you please—what is your name?"

"Johnson."

"A brother?"

"No, sir; he is distrustful, as you may have observed and would not allow me to come—he desired to see for himself. He is satisfied and I wish to pay you a retainer. His business is important, how much shall it be?"

Very business-like and giving an impression of means without limit; but this lawyer said:

"Let me first understand the case."

The stranger, who had pulled a handful of gold from his pocket, paused in the act of laying it on the table, and looked the other in the eyes.

"I never before knew a lawyer to hesitate——"

"We will not discuss that, sir—what is your business with me?"

The patronizing smile accompanying this Mr. Johnson's unfinished remark, became chilled at its birth and the look of surprise following, drifted almost imperceptibly into one of deference. He had encountered an anomaly and was puzzled how to deal with it. In the language of the Bar he finally "pulled himself together:"

"The man to whom you were talking this morning has an interest in a mine here, I conclude from what he tells me of your advice to him; I have a contingent interest, depending upon his success in claiming his rights."

"Who is this friend of yours?"

"He has been absent from Basset Bar some years."

"Who is he—what is his name? Are you afraid to answer my question, sir?"

"Dick Covington."

The lawyer, in whose face not a muscle moved to give token of his thoughts, looked out at his prospective client from under half-closed eyelids.

"Dick Covington has been dead these five years, at least."

"Nevertheless you talked with him this morning," and Mr. Johnson was encouraged to smile again.

"And he would claim his son's interest in the Jack Pot?"

"Exactly—you know something about the property?"

"And he would prosecute his former wife for bigamy?" not heeding the inquiry.

"That is a scheme of his own in which I have no interest."

"I am glad of it."

"Now you understand what is required—name your retainer," and Mr. Johnson advanced the hand with the gold in it.

"What interest have you in the claim that Covington proposes to set up?"

"My interest is not fixed."

"But you are aiding him?"

"Yes."

"He has no means?"

"No."

"Your friendship for him lies in the direction of your interest in what he may recover?"

"Yes."

"You know that Covington abandoned his wife and child?"

"I do not care anything about that."

"And I do not care to take your case, Mr. Johnson."

The men sat looking at each other, Mr. Johnson in amazement; finally the latter inquired:

"But Covington has a good case, has he not?"

"I do not care to have anything to do with it—do you understand?"

Mr. Johnson did understand and went out without being admonished in express terms, carrying with him this impression:

"We have struck a fool for a lawyer, or one who has more money than he wants."

But Mr. Johnson was altogether wrong.

He did not go far to find a lawyer less punctilious; Basset Bar was always ripe for a sensation.

As a half-owner and general manager of the bonanza of Basset Bar, Tincup Harris had achieved social distinction. To give him credit, his title of colonel sat well upon his shoulders. He needed counsel and sought the gentleman first approached by Mr. Johnson.

"I cannot help you, Colonel."

"Fer why? hain't yer always been my lawyer?"

"Yes, but I have the other side of the business from Mr. Johnson."

"So much the better."

"So much the worse, Colonel, for me—I believe this man Covington, if he can prove his identity, has a good claim, and I have as much as told him so, though I feel like kicking myself for a fool in being entrapped as I was."

"Has a good claim, has he! He'll be a damned long time making it good—you hear me?"

"Do not be guilty of any foolishness, Colonel. Go and consult—Badger, for instance—he can help you if any one can."

"What about?"

"The mine, of course."

"Thet's not what's troublin' of me—ef he gits in there I'll make a healthy pardner fer him—it's this bigamy business as is talked about."

"Oh, that's it—what does Mrs. Harris say?"

"Say! well not much, but she's plumb worried to death, who'd a thought of the drunken loafer turnin' up after he'd been dead and buried all this time?"

"But what does she say about him, Colonel?"

"She says nothin'."

"To be plain, Colonel, does she prefer him to you?"

"Prefer hell! no! But yer see wer I am an' wer she is, she's my wife an' she ain't—and I think too high of her, only to stan' by an' see no harm comes, till we knows wer we air."

"Are you sure, Colonel, that this man is Covington?"

"I hain't a mite of doubt."

"How long has he been absent?"

"Six year the comin' fall."

"And you were married, when?"

"This last spring."

"Tell your wife not to trouble herself; if the public prosecutor knows his business, she will hear nothing from that quarter."

"No bigamy?"

"No."

"She ain't done no wrong?"

"Certainly not, in the eye of the law."

"God bless yer, jedge—put it there," and the Colonel held out his hand. "You see it wer my fault not her'n—I ast her, yer know."

"I presume so," and this "jedge" smiled in spite of himself and the moist eyes of the Colonel.

"An' she's my wife?"

"I would suggest, Colonel, that you pursue the course you expressed a moment since: 'Stand by' awhile."

"Jess so—I see."

"Go consult Badger about the mine and leave the other matter with me."

The snow was whirling over the mountains, down the gorges and being driven into great drifts before Dick Covington could be prevailed upon to sign the necessary bill to bring his wife and Harris into court to establish himself and his claim in the Jack Pot mine. He would get drunk despite the attentions of Mr. Johnson; when he was drunk he could not be prevailed upon to do anything; never fully sober, he suspected a sinister purpose in every paper presented to him and refused to put his sign manual to it. Mr. Johnson was perplexed. Mr. Badger was jubilant when the bill was filed, and he interposed a demurrer.

The cabin occupied by the two worthies stood near the outskirts of Basset Bar. To do honor to the commencement of the suit, Dick Covington was permitted a little indulgence in the evening.

"I say, pard, give us another pull at that pizen;" there was a weak smile on the face and the feeble hand reached out and failed on the way.

"You have had enough for to-night—better lie down and sleep."

"Wisher could—what's thet!"

Johnson looked at him, the speaker had one

hand raised to impose silence, and there was less tremor in it; he held the position till Johnson spoke.

"I don't hear anything."

"I heard somebody holler."

"Nothing but the wind."

"Mebbe—I say, pardner, gimme jist another—jist one!"

"It is all gone, Dick—but if you will sign this, I'll get you some," and he placed a writing before him and set pen and ink conveniently.

"What is it?"

"I am out, you know, considerable on this venture of yours, and this is an acknowledgment merely, in case of an accident."

"I can't see it, pardner."

"Well, take your time and I will get the bottle filled," and Mr. Johnson went out.

Covington traced the writing line by line with the aid of his trembling finger and laughed. The sound of his own voice seemed to startle him and he looked up. The staring eyes searched in their gaze every nook of the sordid cabin and then a leer came into the sodden face. There was no one here! yet some one might be watching, but he would be too cunning and would escape, and when Johnson should return, how surprised he would be to find the place empty. He laughed at the thought—a subdued laugh, as if not to disturb the most vigilant of watchers, but a laugh so pitiful that one must weep at the sound of it. Hark!

again! The hand so weak a second before was raised steadily, the other, resting on the table, assisted him to his feet. The eyes were filled with terror now, the glances here and there were sudden and ceaseless; stealthily he crept toward the door, put his hand upon the latch and swung it open—Johnson, with the bottle in his hand stood in the way.

"Where——"

The other did not give him time to conclude the question, but knocked him down, and, with a yell that men did not soon forget, was over him, out in the driving storm and up the mountain side a second time along the old trail as if by instinct: the way had served him once.

Follow him! oh, no! As well endeavor to track any other wild beast in the night. The generosity of the Bar was broad, but not broad enough for that. It was moved, however, when daylight came and the storm had ceased. The morning sun coming up over the Range bathed in indescribable beauty the lofty ridge where the wind always swept away the snow. The rose tints died out, the gold color came and vanished, and the sun coming down warm, thawed out the virgin crystals on the matted hair and beard and turned them into trembling sapphires, but imparted no heat to the wearer lying there.

CALLED:

A GEODE FROM GRIDDLE GULCH.

CALLED.

A GEODE FROM GRIDDLE GULCH.

I.

If a dog habitually barks in the night, no matter what may be his nobility, he imperils his greatness. That great, long-haired brute of Miss Nevins', across the way in the terrace, was given to this sort of annoyance. Littlejohn admired the dog in the day time, while the dog's mistress was a source of alternate misery and ecstasy. Miss Nevins did not know that such a man as Littlejohn encumbered the earth, while Littlejohn knew her as an essential to his existence. He was modest, as becomes a man of merit, and revelled in irreproachable garments; his shoes and neckties, especially, were dazzling, and the chief objects of his solicitude. He was on the eve a dozen times of availing himself of offers of an introduction, and as many times was overcome at the critical moment, being reminded of a sudden and pressing engagement. These appointments would take him off so quickly that a hasty walk around four blocks of the beautiful city of Golddust was neces-

sary to induce that calmness essential to a proper appreciation of Tupper, to whom Littlejohn resorted in these emergencies.

Littlejohn pined and purchased a flute, upon which he learned to play "Home, Sweet Home" in slow time, and he did play, until the neighbors were in a fair way to require inquisitions *de lunatico*. Early in the history of Golddust, Littlejohn would have been invited—the term is used advisedly—to burn the instrument or abandon the camp. But the camp had grown to be a city, and this inoffensive citizen was peculiar to the more recent civilization. His landlady remonstrated: could he not play or learn to play some other, more inspiriting air? Or, "drat the man," if he would only put a little more life into the one tune and make home what it ought to be, and less of a burden! was the gentle creature's comment in the absence of Littlejohn.

"Ah, the sweet melancholy of it, my dear madam —you know not how dear to my heart are the ——"

"Do give us a rest, Mr. Littlejohn—do you want to drive away my boarders?"

The asperity of this inquiry, together with its sordid implications, destroyed Littlejohn's freshness and confirmed his embryo opinion of the world's harshness. If a man could not fly to a woman for certain sympathy in such straits, whither were we drifting!

Littlejohn must renounce "Home, Sweet Home,"

or his quarters, "any way." The admonition was as imperative as a bull decorated with a hempen cord and embellished with the heads of the saints. But how could he forego the intermittent and unsatisfactory pleasure of seeing Miss Nevins daily across the way—this sacrifice being involved in the change suggested? He could not loiter on the street corner in view of the unsympathizing star, loafing there on two dollars per day and perquisites; he would be required to move on by this blue and brass guardian, who flourished a club in the eyes of his wards indiscriminately and with commendable zeal.

"Ah, could he but make the acquaintance of the Juno-eyed——"

"See here, Mr. Littlejohn, none o' that—Miss Nevins is a very beautiful, common-sense girl, and you mustn't set her up with them heathenesses as you reads of."

Misunderstood! always misunderstood! Such is fate!

"Ef you want to git acquainted, why, in the name of common sense, don't you do it—she ain't a bear nor yet a lion."

"A bear, dear madam! Ah, she's an angel!"

"Rats! Mr. Littlejohn."

Dust accumulated on the flute. The great, black dog disappeared and Littlejohn found it quite as impossible to sleep without his music as with it. He appealed to his landlady if he were not growing thin? Why didn't he eat more, then, and take

exercise? Because the streets were muddy, and his shoes in the conspiracy to aggravate him, if not to destroy his peace of mind, when he attempted to walk.

"Piece of mind, I should say; what a man! Don't Miss Nevins walk, and show her ankles at that, I'd like to know?—and pretty ankles they be, too."

"Oh! my dear madam!" and Littlejohn blushed.

"Drat the man!" He was incorrigible.

But one day Miss Nevins lost her overshoe and Littlejohn, on the alert, rescued it with a temptation to petty larceny haunting him. The owner, however, stood watching, and the fascinating eyes drew him out of the mire with the overshoe. When she thanked him, deploring his soiled condition, he was consumed. Still he would follow all day if she liked, to extricate the overshoes; indeed it should be his mission in life. It became Miss Nevins' turn to blush on the street corner with everybody looking on. Littlejohn was in despair; the purest aspirations of his heart were misunderstood and crushed; there was nothing left to him now but to go away and wither by slow stages.

* * * * * *

The evening coach from Elkhorn was ahead of time and the loungers in front of the Ruby Silver Saloon opposite the stage office looked on and wondered. Over Pine Point and down the long hill, the four horses coming on the dead run, the

Concord swayed this way and that, as if at any moment it might turn over and down the mountain side to be smashed into splinters.

"Bill's jist a *whoopin'* her up."

"No, I guess not."

"He'll make it, bet you."

"Well, he will, and don't you forget it."

The sturdy figure on the box, two miles away, has one foot pressed hard upon the quivering brake, the lines taut as if they would part under the strain; the face under the broad-brim hat is stern and set, and the gray eyes watch every boulder in the road and he sweeps around and between them without a jolt; there is not a motion in the ears of the steaming team that escapes him, coming at that frightful pace. As the foot of the hill is neared the bunch of heavy lines is gathered into one hand and the long, slender lash stretches out to sting the flank of the off leader, who has dared to swerve an inch out of the proper course; and the horse understands and obeys.

"Yes, you *bet* he can drive."

There is a woman inside and such a woman is a novelty in Griddle Gulch. Way is made for her to alight first. Half a dozen hands are tendered to assist and as many hats are lifted; sorry-looking hats, that hide white foreheads but refuse to protect faces which are bronzed and bearded. How rough everything seems except those faces; and what a multitude of sympathetic eyes to look into, the tenderness detected at a glance.

"This way, Miss, you shall go on in a minute." The manner of the invitation inspires absolute confidence.

But she is in such haste a minute seems an age. Yes, we know, but the trail is steep and rough; and unaccustomed to the altitude, you would soon be out of breath. You shall get on faster and as comfortably as possible. The pony is here, no side-saddle, but the pommel will answer no doubt; put your foot here. What a pretty foot it is, too, resting half a second in the coarse, strong hand that lifts her as if she were a little child.

And Bill, his duty done for the day, comes out of the Ruby Silver, rubbing his moustache with the back of a bloated buckskin glove that spreads his fingers apart, looks up the trail at the two figures leading the way and the woman on the pony:

"I knowed as every mile was ten to the little gal an' I made 'em short fer her as I could."

* * * * * *

No doubt Galena Tom looks very much like a vagabond sitting on a keg before the Ruby Silver saloon; no one would be censured for expressing such an opinion of him. Yes, look at him, lounging doubled up, his elbows on his knees, his arms crossed and the grimy hands hanging idly, as if the owner did not have sufficient energy to lift them to his mouth, even to "take something." Look at his toes protruding from his boots and the boots innocent of grease, to say nothing of

blacking, from the day of their purchase; worn patches on the knees of his trousers and the wide stitches grinning an apology to the other rags; look at the beard and hair streaked with silver, long and unkempt, and the old slouch hat with its pendant brim repulsive in accumulated grease. Vagabond! certainly you are—there can be no possible mistake about it. It is a little strange, though, that such a pair of eyes should be set in such a face—great, dreamy, brown eyes, looking up at you and, not seeing you at first, eclipsing the rags and the grime.

"Come, Galena, take something?"

"Thank you, pard, but excuse me this time."

How white the teeth are and how even, as the beard parts sufficiently on the smiling lips to disclose them.

There was sufficient, however, in the invitation to arouse the figure and to show, when it was straightened, a good pair of shoulders and a sturdy stride going up the mountain toward the Four-Ace Claim.

There is an immense amount of dirt at the mouth of the tunnel of the Four Ace, and you wonder whether one man could have dug and brought it out a wheelbarrow load at a time. If so, how long had it taken him? And what a fund of patient labor it represents. What could inspire a man to work so, day after day and month after month? Why, the same incentive, of course, that moves the rest of human kind. But what hope

could any one have delving in such an unpromising place, and timbering foot by foot the uninviting passage into the earth? Hope! why bless her beautiful presence! what could any one do without her! Dark-eyed Juno was never more fascinating in the dreamer's sublimest moment than she, standing always at the breast of the long, dark way. She is always inviting, rarely given to deserting one; she does not permit her weakest votaries to lose inspiration; only now and then her insidious rival tempts with poison or pistol, or steals a lover not worth saving or impossible to save. She looks beautiful in the candle-light: one slender, white hand rests against the dark earth, the other extending an invitation; the ravishing brown eyes looking out from under the long, silken lashes, add an eloquence to the appeal; the dainty primrose out in the sunlight is no match in color for the smooth cheeks, and the sweet smile wreathing the ripe lips is resistless; what a superb figure she has, and, standing in front of the breast, every fold of her drapery is strengthened by the dark background; and see the magnificent crown she wears parted over the low, square brow, coiled smooth at the back of her head, and shining even in the dull glow.

Would you not follow as long as she beckoned and you could read in her silent promises the realization of all your waking dreams? And this was the presence before Galena Tom. She was there with him in the candle-light; there before

his morning work began, and while he fried his bacon and boiled his coffee; there at noon-tide and at evening when, sitting on the edge of the barrow, he would look down into the quiet valley and over the intervening hills to the great Range blushing in the mellow rays of the declining sun. He could feel the delicate touch of the white hand upon his matted hair, feel her breath upon his cheek and the ripe lips pressed to his own. How her caress would bring the light into his eyes and the flush to his face! To-morrow she might crown his devotion, and if she should put him off he would love her none the less—bewitching Hope!

But what surroundings in which to woo such a goddess! The very place! she is not needed so much where everything is luxurious, for there she would not have that to cherish upon which she thrives. The cabin near the tunnel's mouth, with its hard-packed dirt floor and fire place of rough stones, its dirt roof, its dingy little window, the bunk on one side, a pair of uncertain stools, an old table and a few bits of tinware, all revelling in the rank odor of too many meals of bacon lingering unappetizingly. She loves to dwell here apparelled in her most gorgeous raiment and displaying her most winsome arts—the handmaid of poverty.

"Turk, old friend, howdy!" Brown-eyed, broad-chested, strong-limbed Turk, with glossy black hair. Even he has been entertaining the beautiful vision and finds his reward striding up the trail

and trots to meet it, puts his great paws upon the tangled beard and the dark eyes look into each other's in confidence and love; and the man's arm is around the dog's neck and the grimy hand caresses the noble head. "Been lonesome, haven't you—we must take the rifle and get some meat, old chap, the larder's pretty bare;" and the other responds cheerfully, as if each word were familiar to him and cheerfulness a prime necessity in this emergency.

Galena glanced at the tunnel's mouth as he entered the cabin. His mission in Griddle Gulch had been a failure. What possible use could there be in encouraging a man who had gone two hundred feet under ground with no show of pay dirt worth considering? None whatever; folly was moving this man, nothing else. It was kindness to refuse; and how nicely the refusal sits on the conscience after the negative is uttered and the solicitor has departed; from an irksome task anticipated it has turned into a necessary duty performed; relief from further importunity is now assured and reveals itself by a sigh. But what if the issue should eventually prove the denial a mistake? The inquiry is very brief in its obtrusion and receives an incredulous laugh for an answer; and the sun comes up next morning and sets at night, and we struggle with and climb over each other, as though there were no tender place in any one's heart but our own to be hurt or soothed. Into the tunnel's mouth and along the black pas-

sage to the breast, Galena drifts even as he strides over his door-sill, to meet the smiling face—and under one dainty foot she already holds in durance the shadows he had been fighting all the morning.

"Come, old chap, we'll keep each other company." And the two went up and over the mountain. A little extra meat might bring the means by which to continue his wooing; not very romantic, yet not devoid of fancy.

* * * * * *

The sun comes down warm, and Turk lies at the tunnel's mouth, his head between his paws and his eyes closed; not asleep but enjoying his leisure. He makes a slight movement of his tail that might indicate a pleasant emotion, but there is nothing in sight and no sound breaks the quiet except a solitary "camp robber" perched on an adjacent boulder, not two yards away.

The bird cocked his eye at the reposing nobleman and unawed by his massiveness hopped down, mildly deprecating, no doubt, the lack of meat in the vicinity, and jerked himself along to recklessly taste a forepaw of his highness. Did the keen sense of the bright-eyed prospector in gray detect the ghost of a meal lingering there? Turk opened his eyes at the intrusion, raised his head and looked at the little dare-devil; what a comical look of inquiry it was, the head turned the least bit and the great brown eyes questioning. Turk put out his nose, not vindictively, and insolence gave a little hop and a flutter and alighted on the broad

head, then complacently hopped on to the shaggy shoulders. The dog turned his head to obtain another view of this epitome of impudence to meet the bright eye cocked at him. The vibration of Turk's tail was more decided as Galena came into the sunlight pushing the wheelbarrow.

"Hallo, old chap, got company!" and Galena, sitting on the barrow handle sweeping the perspiration from his forehead with his finger, laughed at the pair, then coughed a little.

All the day long Galena came and went with the wheel-barrow and the dump grew wider on the top. To-morrow he should put in a blast. Every time he spoke to Turk in response to the wagging tail, he would cough. And Turk could hear that strange sound coming at times from out the darkness and became so accustomed to it that he ceased to open his eyes when it reached him.

The blast was put in and the shot tumbled down a mass of earth and rocks, and the breast was further back by several feet and the beautiful vison stood there more radiant than ever. But Galena was tired, really his cough troubled him, his voice was hoarse, he would quit for the day and to-morrow clean up and sort out the stuff, if there should be anything to be sorted.

The sun came up the next day and shot his rays warmly until they encountered the pines, when they crept through and kissed the wild columbines in front of the cabin. Galena sat on the rude bench there, sheltered, wondering why he was so

hot and dry, and what the pain meant that was griping him under the ribs. Turk sat looking at him and occasionally casting a glance toward the tunnel's mouth, as if he desired to understand the cause of the delay in beginning the day's work. But Galena gave no sign; after a little, when the sun reached him, he went into the cabin and crawled into the bunk, where he lay unconcerned, except for the pain, while the dog wandered in and out, the only restless one. The sun was putting the day behind him and draping the distant peaks in amber, before turning them into gray and hiding them until he should make them blush again under his early morning caress. The twilight came with its soothing quiet, when even the gentle summer breath ceased its murmuring through the stately pines; then the afterglow, which garmented the hills and valley in pale gold in turn to drift away, leaving the earth to the benediction of the stars. And there across the open door lay the watcher, turning his head now and again toward the tossing figure or, at an incoherent word, leaving his post and looking through the dark into the eyes that now were strange to him, as if asking what he might do. If in his devotion he could interpose his own life between the loved one and the shadow hovering near, would he not? Did he feel the breath of the sable wings and understand the resistless mission they were on? May be. As the stars faded out and the day came back, the hand that he licked could respond

but feebly; with an anxious glance into the half unconscious eyes, and a faint whimper, he started toward the door, came back again, and then away down the trail.

At the Ruby Silver two or three had gathered for an eye-opener, and here also was Turk, an unquestionably sober dog owned by a temperate master.

"Hello, Turk, old beauty! after a mornin' nip?"

"What in hell's the matter with the dog?"

"Hear him whimper!"

"What is it, beauty?"

"Let my pants alone, damn your eyes, they ain't much but rags anyhow."

"Sumpin's the matter with the brute—see him, he's comin' back again!"

"Sumpin's gone wrong, that's wot it is."

Yes, gentleman of Griddle Gulch, something has gone wrong, is going wrong all the time, and much of it we might set right, or at least prevent going wrong, if we would; and these men follow the dog without understanding the reproach of his example. But they marvel at his sagacity when they reach Galena's cabin and find the man who, in lucid intervals, could tell them of it.

Griddle Gulch boasts a doctor and they have him up, and he works heroically with his heroic mustard and hot boulders in lieu of something better, and with some show of success for awhile. Then he says:

"If Galena has any friends, better send for 'em."

But no one there knows of any friends; "perhaps some one does in the Gulch."

There is no lack of attention now, and Turk is quite impartial in going with him who goes to the sick man's side, looking from nurse to patient and every now and then, that whimper! so piteous in its appeal that the men wonder, as they listen, if there is not "something human in him."

A very few days come and go and the fair vision flits in and out, sometimes with the smile and the winsome ways, then sad, and finally she disappears and Galena lies close under the sable wings of the dark shadow. But he is a man of courage and battles bravely for the hours, the minutes, the seconds; and when the struggle has quite ceased, with the going down of the sun, the fair face comes in again at the open door, and those there recognize and make way for her; and Galena feels her breath upon his face and the grimy hand is in the white ones and hot tears fall upon it; it is pressed against the throbbing heart as if she would give the warm blood pulsing there to impart to it its old-time heat, so grimed and toil-worn in her service, and he understands and smiles.

The golden light of the afterglow comes again to bathe the whole valley and the mountain sides, steals into the rude cabin and over the rude bunk and the cold, white face with the smile upon it, and upon a crouching figure with a wealth of tumbled hair beautiful in its disorder, crowned as it is with the toil-stained hand in benediction.

For a time there were occasional mild arraignments of Providence at the untimely taking off of Tom Nevins.

"It's a great pity he was called jest as he had struck it rich."

"He'd orter switched on his system, that's what he'd ort; diggin' in a wet tunnel ain't no good."

"And bluffin' don't pay."

"Not in this game."

"Mebbe he win, after all."

"Mebbe; mebbe he double shot the turn."

And with such obituaries Tom was laid away on the hillside in Griddle Gulch.

II.

The weather besides being coquettish is capable of base tyranny and altogether lacking in gallantry. Griddle Gulch is snowed in, the stage is taken off, the mail goes in and out once each week, on the back of a carrier who is young and robust, and who travels on snow shoes. Even he has doubts, after awhile, and is not certain when he goes out that he will be able to return. Among the others held in durance, unexpectedly caught, is the owner of the Four Ace Mine, and she lives in a little martin-box of a cottage, perched on the mountain side, but very comfortable and not lacking in servitors willing to do, without wages, if she would trespass upon their good nature, or take advantage of their infatuation. The mail carrier goes out one day and fails to come back; it is presumed that he reached Elkhorn, as the storm set in several hours after his departure, giving him time perhaps to make the station; his success or failure would be known certainly in the spring.

The days of sunshine had no effect on the snow; even the icicles on the south eaves refused to do anything but obstinately glisten. Then again lead-colored skies would occasionally lead to men-

tal depression, or add to it, in the Gulch. A cold, gray mist would settle about the mountains, the air would be raw and damp; it would neither snow nor rain, but exhibit a sullen disposition and ability to do either if it liked, though rain at such a season would be unprecedented; there was something of the manner of the bully about the weather in this temper, as when the exasperating loafer has a small man in a corner; the small man feels his degrading position, he can neither fight nor run away, and is possessed by hope and despair alternately, as the mood of his tormenter varies; then, realizing his impotency, he becomes sullen under the aggressive meanness.

At noon every one considered that the lead color, the dampness, and the chill had prevailed for a month and the weather was damned accordingly. Even Belle McNulty, shivering in a thin dress, a small shawl and rusty shoes, as she stood in the doorway of the Ruby Silver, added her anathemas.

A tall man, displaying a white shirt bosom and a comfortable overcoat, and having his hands in the pockets, looked down at her.

"Wisher may die if it don't make a feller feel like goin' over the range—don't care if I do—sugar in mine, barkeep."

The impossible swagger, the little shudder as she drew the mean shawl tightly about her shoulders and held it with one little hand, the hysterical chuckle as she raised the glass to her dry lips and nodded at the white-shirted donor—all this

seemed revolting, as such scenes will when one can recognize nothing short of hopeless depravity.

"What you doin' here?"

The question, rounded out with an oath, is altogether superfluous, but the sound of the voice drives away even the pitiful smile, and the pinched face becomes whiter, then flushed, and utter submissiveness follows.

"I was waiting for you, Bill."

"You git!"

And the epithets that trod upon the heels of the command! what of them? One wonders if they were ever, with their unutterable contempt, strange to her! She gives no sign to enlighten one, only shrinks out at the door like a dog that has been cowed, glad to escape with bare words.

And this tutelary interloper! what of him! Not an uncommon figure in the environment: a revolver on his hip, his trousers tucked into his boots, and his hat pushed back from his face; not a pleasant face, even after the glitter has gone out of the dark eyes and the cheeks have assumed their customary pallor. He turns and catches the gray eyes of the man who was in part the cause of his anger.

"You don't like your lady to drink with a stranger?"

The inquiry elicits only this answer, but who shall portray the contempt in it:

"Lady!"

"That was my word—I wouldn't talk to a dog as you did to her."

"Who in hell are you?"

"Mark Rockwood—maybe you don't like my style?"

"See here, what you layin' fer?"

"Gentlemen!" interposes the bar-keeper.

"For you, if it suits you!"

There is nothing boisterous in the demeanor of either, but a bitterness not to be misunderstood. And Rockwood, with his left elbow resting on the rough bar, and his right hand negligently in his overcoat pocket, looks at Bill smilingly; but the light in his eyes is cruel.

Bill grips the hilt of his revolver. The next second there is a loud report; he throws up his hands as if he would clutch the smoke from Rockwood's pistol, and falls, face down. The other stands over him, touches him with the toe of his boot, and rolls him over on his back. The faint shudder that follows is not in recognition of the indignity. Then suddenly, as if a fresh thought had flashed into his mind, Rockwood faces the half-dozen men in the room, but detects no sign of interference. He drops the short-barrelled weapon into his overcoat pocket, keeps his hand upon it, and leisurely walks out.

Word quickly gets abroad that Bill McNulty has been shot by a comparative stranger in the camp, of the name of Rockwood, and the body lies in the Ruby Silver saloon; and Rockwood,

walking away, feels a touch upon his arm and looks around at a man, who says, quietly:

"I want you." There is no denying this man's plea; it has a great force back of the weapon in his hand, back of the man himself, that is at once recognized.

"He had been abusing a woman, and I killed him in self-defense."

"I don't care to hear anything—you come with me."

"All right."

Under the code of Griddle Gulch the case was one to be inquired into, and when inquired into, not to be treated with extreme measures:

"Bill McNulty went for his gun, but the other got the drop." Besides: "What's the odds? They were two of a kind!"

Griddle Gulch has its periods of moral renovation, as necessary as storms to clear the atmosphere, or the housewife's broom and mop-pail to clean the house. Such an incident as the killing of Bill McNulty has its effect; it awakens the slumbering sentiment of decency that commonly lies buried under the other aspirations of the Gulch. Rockwood must leave the camp. Then the revolution gathers volume as revolutions are sometimes prone, extends to Belle McNulty and some other sisters in like social standing, and to divers gentlemen in the McNulty peerage.

What! In the dead of winter, with three feet of snow on the level and drifts unfathomable?

Well, these reprobates are a hard lot, doing no good under Heaven, but much harm; what's the odds!

It is the day before Christmas—has the day no suggestions? Yes, of a good time—turkey, if it could be procured, wine ditto; but bacon and whiskey in lieu of the old time tokens of thanksgiving sanctified by the atmosphere of home.

The voices of unspeakable sweetness that were wont to make the day beautiful and holy—what of them? They are silent.

What of Him who consorted with the McNulty's of nearly two thousand years ago? Nothing—the time is too long gone and there is a dearth of the interest that is inspired by personal contact.

"I will go, gentlemen, but I doubt if these women can—and these men, they are not to blame for my act."

There is something in the manner of the man and his offer that moves the current a little to one side. It awakens a sense of the cruelty in the ban that had gone out against him and the others, and somehow this man Rockwood seems to stand suddenly on a level and not below. The impression he creates does not drift them back nearly two thousand years, but decades, merely, and to a thought of the voices, and this brings a remembrance of the story of the great sacrifice fading out. Then comes a respite and the Gulch is saved the mortification of doing a base wrong.

Up in the martin-box before a cheerful fire,

Turk lies dozing; his mistress reading. The dog throws his head up suddenly and the next moment gently beats the floor with his tail. A step and a knock, and Hope Nevins opens the door to admit a small, gray man, who enters in a cloud of cold air. This man is the superintendent of the Four Ace Mine, and comes to say that her proposed dinner for the morrow will necessarily be a very limited affair. The men understand how it is, about the early coming of the snow and the repeated storms cutting off communication; and the people in the Gulch, not any too provident and failing to anticipate such an early shutting in, had not fully obtained their winter supplies. The men will be pleased to forego the dinner entirely, if she will permit it. It is something of a disappointment, she has set her heart on seeing the men enjoy "a good, old-fashioned Christmas," as near as it can be attained, but if they prefer not, she will not insist. And is it really to be apprehended that provisions will run short before the winter is over? Well, not that, exactly; at the same time it will be prudent to economize. Did the people in the Gulch realize the situation? That he could not say, they were not in the habit of anticipating trouble, but took it by the throat when it came. As winter advanced, or toward spring, was it not probable that communication would be more difficult? Well, the heaviest storms came later, "but if the worst comes, provisions can be got in somehow."

But the owner of the Four Ace Mine did not relish this "somehow." She insisted on knowing the exact situation. It boded ill, but really there was no cause for immediate apprehension.

The sun came up clear the next day, the weather seemed to have made up its mind to be reasonable; and the icicles long before noon submitted to the change, wept themselves away a tear at a time, or broke down with little crashes, giving no warning. The sunshine imparted its cheerfulness to the Gulch, and there was "a good time" without any encroachments on the cemetery. But the following day the snow fell softly, and thickened the already heavy carpet inch by inch.

"Don't it beat the devil!"

"No, guess not, he's in to win."

"What'll be the end of this?"

"Can't say."

The winter drags, the sun does not wear away the white covering perceptibly, or if it does, the next storm more than makes amends for the loss.

It is beginning to be understood, each day, that something in the way of food has given out, and an effort must be made to reach the outside. The crust is fairly good during the early hours of the morning, but it is difficult snow-shoeing at any other time. In these straits a party of select men is organized and starts out with sleds while the stars are shining down upon them, and the whole population of the Gulch is awake "to give it a good send off." But this party fails in its mission,

returning next night with two of its members disabled—and it is serious with Griddle Gulch.

In this crisis one man presents himself who has hitherto exhibited a reluctance to obtrude upon the councils of the better element. He will go, he thinks he can reach Elkhorn and from there the way out must be open, or at least comparatively easy. The distance is forty miles or more to Elkhorn. But this man is athletic, a good shoer and has no fear, while he understands the peril. He makes the proffer of his services in the same qui t manner that he offered to leave at their command a little while before. And the next morning, under the stars, Rockwood starts on his journey.

Up in the martin-box that night Turk throws his head up again; but this time there is no friendly demonstration, he growls instead and steps to the threshold and sniffs at it.

"Be quiet."

He stands by the side of his mistress as she opens the door and looks out at the stars. A little nearer the level of her feet she discovers a figure in a poor dress and a little shawl drawn tight about the shoulders. She is not unfamiliar with the sight of the disheveled hair, the pinched face and the great, dark eyes now shining in the firelight. The apparition is unexpected and a little startling for the moment. But then, will she not come in? No! Please do, it is cold standing in the open door. Reluctantly, as if treading on unfamiliar, holy ground, the figure edges in and

stands with her back against the wall, a half defiant expression in her eyes. And the other, coming too near, the mean skirt is drawn in, as if it must avoid contact with the clean garments. Will she not sit down? No! Please do, it is wearisome coming up the trail even in good weather. No! The purpose of the visit can be quickly epxlained:

The owner of the Four Ace has provisions in her store-room, she will need them and must put a guard over them. And the mistress "will not give the thing away?" She who gives the warning would be killed, perhaps, for betraying the plot!

Is it so serious, then, with some of her friends in the Gulch? If so, to-morrow, even now, if they will come, she will throw open her store-house and share with them. Will not this messenger so tell them and return?

"Please come back to me and let me help you."

And the beautiful white hand that shone so on the tunnel's breast reaches out for the little unwilling one that is so defiled, and which persists in withholding itself, its owner shrinking in a small heap on the floor and needing both that she may bury the shame-stricken, tear-stained face. Then, is it possible that the bewildered head feels a sacred touch upon it! It is startling! and she regains her feet and is out into the night, haunted by the words that came pleadingly, as from one

praying a favor: "Come back to me and let me help you!"

Twenty miles away under the shelter of a friendly rock, with a cheerful fire sending up miniature rivals to the stars looking down, sits a man, with a blackened face to protect the gray eyes from the glare of the sun under which he has labored all day. His snow shoes are beside him and when he has eaten a bit of bread and swallowed a tincupful of tea he rolls himself in his blanket and, with his feet to the blaze, sleeps like one who has earned the repose by honest work. The way to-morrow will be more difficult and before the morning star peeps over the eastern hills, he will be afoot. There will be a range to climb. Through the timber the way is blazed and he has a frozen mountain stream to aid him, but above, he must trust to his memory of prominent points to strike the trail on the other slope. It might have been better, perhaps, had he followed the road, or where the road was supposed to lie, instead of the old trail, but the latter would save many a mile. He is not half-way from his late camp to the summit before there comes a faint streak of light; this is an encouragement because the snow has so changed the aspect of the waste that it is difficult to determine the way with any degree of assurance—a mistake would be serious, perhaps fatal. Slowly and laboriously, the clogs failing to take hold at times, on the smooth crust, the solitary figure struggles upward. The light increases as he

emerges from the timber and, away above, the outline of the range rests against a background of dull gold that brightens each moment, then the crimson bathes the treeless solitude, quickly drifts into pale rose color, and then the vault is blue.

Rockwood paused and looked over the vast ocean glittering and white under the sun, fearful in its magnificence, and wrapped in a silence that became painful, himself the only living thing in its midst; for the first time in his journey he felt weak, but the next moment, shaking off the depressing influence, he trudged on.

The forenoon is half spent in reaching the summit, and he pauses to fill his lungs and to scan the broad level for some token of his route. A little to the left he thinks he can distinguish a few tree tops from the rocks; one cone-like peak, higher than its neighbors, grows familiar, and he starts in that direction. When he reaches the opposite edge of the plateau, and skirts it a little way, he finds that the snow has piled in so high that every trace of the trail is hidden. Finally he detects an irregular line running a short distance through the tree tops, and as he looks down upon it, it seems like a veritable trail through snow-covered bushes. He follows it, as one wrecked in mid-ocean would seize any bit of drift that promises support and revives the hope dying out. Passing a huge boulder, he detects upon the face of it the marks of a fire; there is something encouraging in this feeble sign; a little further on, at his

right, he discovers a tree with the unmistakable mark of an ax, and is certain now of his way, and that the Gulch will have succor.

Rockwood's journey and its results have become a story of the past and the man has drifted out of sight. From sombre green the pines have put on their brighter hue, and the hillsides are carpeted with blossoms.

And far away from the Gulch and its associations a head with disheveled hair is pillowed softly, and a pale, thin face with great lustrous eyes, is turned toward a vine-covered window. Will someone put aside the vine, just a little; the twilight lingering in the grand mountains is longer and softer than here, but she would look out upon this again and catch sight, if she may, of the meadow lark putting up his evening hymn—it is sweeter to her here than there. And one little hand, no longer stained but white as the pure mantle on the far away hills, rivals the one that looked so beautiful on the tunnel's breast as they are tenderly clasped. And one other sweet face there is filled with ineffable sorrow and love, looking down upon them. So the twilight drifts into darkness, but it is light for one of these three.

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